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ARCHAIC ROLE DEFINITIONS AND ADULT IDENTITY: AN OBJECT RELATIONS PERSPECTIVE

by

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Abstract

ARCHAIC ROLE DEFINITIONS AND ADULT IDENTITY:
AN OBJECT RELATIONS PERSPECTIVE

by

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Beginning with the observation that members of groups tend to recreate for themselves, as much as possible, roles that duplicate the roles they filled in their families of origin, the dissertation hypothesizes the existence of an archaic role definition as a core element of the identity system. Firmed into shape in the family group through a process that begins when self and object differentiation becomes established and the "stranger reaction" signals the existence of a boundary around the family group, the archaic role definition maps, as it were, the object world, the self, and the expected relations between them for the child. In subsequent group situations, where the task of adaptation to the group initiates a regressive process that threatens the loss of a separate identity, the archaic role definition functions as a limit to the regression and provides a guide to the object world confronting the individual in the form of the amorphous group entity.

Theoretically, the archaic role definition is

conceived of as a synthesis of the consistent identifications, object ties, projective identifications, and delineations (projective identifications originating from significant others accepted by the individual) experienced in the family group. Case material drawn from a therapy group is used to illustrate not only the regressive-adaptive process in the group including the efforts of individual members to recreate their archaic roles, but also the past history of object relations that appears to have gone into the formation of the archaic role definition. A concluding chapter explores implications of this concept for work role relationships as well as stages of post-childhood development that involves a reorganization of the object world and the self-concept.

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INTRODUCTION

I. The Problem

Individuals in groups tend to recreate particular roles for themselves, comparable to the roles they occupied in their families of origin. This is a tendency, of course, far from an infallible law. But given a group with a sufficiently loose structure and a membership offering a normative range of expectations, demands, and needs, most group members will unconsciously attempt, in part, to forge such a role for themselves.

In a therapy group with male and female co-leaders, for example, a young hispanic woman, Carmen, consistently took the role of "watcher" and "mediator". That is, typically she would observe and listen to other members of the group, occasionally questioning or commenting on what they had to say, rather than attempting to initiate discussions of her own experiences and dilemmas. Often her interventions took the form of clarification of what members said or wished from each other. Usually she sat equidistantly between the two group leaders, but though maintaining a kind of official neutrality with respect to them, she evidenced a greater interest in the contributions of the female leader and also signs of anger towards her. The second of six children (the second girl), Carman in her early life experienced herself as her mother's supporter and confidante,

particularly during long periods when her father was away travelling and her mother had to cope with the large family by herself. But she also reported that this important position required a renunciation of the position of daughter and of her wishes to gratify close, dependent longings. When her father came home, she recalled excitedly seeking his attention, but here too she settled for a more distant position. On one poignant occasion, she recalled being out walking with him, her older sister and a younger brother, feeling she could not ask for a hand to hold as both her father's hands were occupied by her siblings; instead, she would run ahead and wait for them to catch up, whereupon she would run ahead again, making a kind of game to cover up her sense of displacement. Thus in her family as in the group, she assumed a median position and mediating function, assisting others but at the expense of gratifying her own needs.

Another example from the same group: Arthur, a young photographer, sat consistently next to the male leader, and across from the female leader whom he would guardedly observe. He attached himself to a young male member of the group, whose comments he would frequently echo or amplify and whose feelings seemed often to be comparable to his own. Occasionally he reported vicariously experiencing feelings through this "ally," feelings, that is, he

recognized as his but which he did not feel in himself. (A few times, in fact, he accepted considerable abuse from this member in order not to jeopardize his alliance.) The oldest child in his family, with three brothers and a sister, he reported that home had been a consistent scene of strife, centering around his "overbearing" and "oppressive" mother who frequently exploded with unpredictable accusations. He looked to his father for support, he said, generally in vain, and found himself again and again, as he experienced it, in the position of protecting and defending his younger siblings from emotional abuse, bearing the brunt of his mother's wrath. Thus in the group as in his family he found himself in the role of a lonely ally, attempting to band together with a comparable peer against an uncertain threat.

This is merely an outline of these basic patterns. Later they will be elaborated upon, along with the examples of three of the other members of this same group as part of the effort to illustrate and clarify various aspects of role learning and role behavior in groups. But perhaps enough has been said at this point to suggest broadly what is meant by the recreation in groups of family roles: the tendency to impose a pattern of relationships onto a group which arose in one's family of origin (one's first group) and which organized the significant members of that family

in relation to oneself.

In terms of psychoanalytic theory, this phenomenon appears to pose something of a conceptual dilemma. These examples illustrate the powerful persisting influence of a pattern of relationships involving the person and at least three others: father, mother, and one sibling. Thus the patterns appear more complex than the classical oedipal triads. At the same time, they bear signs of being somewhat more primitive, frequently having been initiated at a relatively early age, in response to problems and opportunities posed for the child by the appearance of a younger sibling or by the recognition of the existing position of an older sibling in the family.

One could easily speculate on the oedipal dimensions of these role patterns. In Carmen's case, for example, we could see in this pattern a submerged rivalry with her mother so that her role as her mother's confidante and helper supplanted not only the regrettably unmet dependency longings but also perhaps more disturbing aggressive and competitive impulses as well. Indeed, being able to think of herself as having sacrificed her own needs for her mother, Carmen might be understood to be winning a kind of victory over her, viewing her as incapable of filling her maternal role by herself without assistance, while at the same time feeling virtuous and deserving of special

appreciation from her father. But while this may well be the case -- and, as we shall see, there is evidence to support this -- it accounts for only some aspects of the overall pattern. The role does other things as well. It transforms and manages rivalrous feelings towards her older sister and younger brother. It incorporates Carmen's identification with her mother. It supports the development of particular interests and skills in perceiving the needs of others (a development that appears to be having its outcome in Carmen's professional identity as a therapist in training). It provides her with a means of organizing the family system from her perspective and defining her place in it.

How does this happen? When does the individual acquire this sense of a family role, and what functions does it perform for him as well as, perhaps, for the family as a whole? Moreover, what is it in groups that tends to activate the individual's particular role behavior, and how, in turn, does that relate to pathological group processes and the individual's capacity for flexibility and change in group settings?

These are, in essence, the two questions this study sets about to address. I do not hope to answer them definitively. My plan is, rather, to develop a theoretical and conceptual perspective, drawing upon psychoanalytic and

group dynamic theory to develop the outlines of a psychodynamic understanding of role relations. In doing so, I will use material reported by Carmen and Arthur, as well as three other members of the same therapy group, and my observations of their behavior, to illustrate concepts and suggest further lines of inquiry. Nothing, I think, will be proved, but it is to be hoped that some fruitful ways of thinking about roles will be developed.

My plan is to begin with the group experience itself. This is not where a role that is characteristic of an individual's mode of group behavior has its origin developmentally, of course, but it is the phenomenological point of departure for questions raised in this inquiry, the place where the role is created afresh and the attempt made to gain acceptance for it. Thus this point of departure has the advantage of starting with the observational data available to us. Chapter One will discuss regression in groups, attempting to understand the dilemmas for the individual of joining and becoming a group member. Chapter Two will delineate the various counter-regressive strategies that group members resort to individually as well as collectively to defend against the anxiety aroused by the regressive process, including the evocation of early role behavior.

I will then attempt to analyze the specific components

that go to make up a role definition in Chapter Three, and examine the behavior and past histories of the group members to illustrate how they originally created their roles in the matrix of their early family life. This, in turn, will bring us to the point of theorizing about how roles are acquired in early development and the functions they serve. This chapter will necessarily be more speculative than the first two, but it will be guided by the data reported by the group members about their early family experience. A final chapter will explore implications for further thought.

Before looking at roles in groups, however, I would like to review in the remainder of this Introduction what the literature has to say on the topic of roles in groups and families as well as explore the meaning of the concept of role, both as it is used in ordinary language and in the social sciences. This, I think, will provide a necessary clarification of the terms of this inquiry as well as a means of anticipating divergent and potentially confusing usages.

II. The Literature

The concept of role has received little discussion among psychoanalytically oriented writers. The term is not to be found in the general index to the Standard Edition of Freud's writings, and a check of the indexes of other major texts reveals a similar gap. It might be argued that role is an interpersonal concept and, as such, properly excluded from psychoanalytic theorizing. But, as the examples of Carmen and Arthur suggest, their role behavior has much to do with their relations to their primary objects and appears to involve processes of internalization and structuralization that appear to affect significantly their on-going adult relationships. Moreover, it has obvious bearing on the psychology of groups. Freud (1921), himself, initiated the application of psychoanalytic concepts to groups, and much work has been done in this area subsequently. Rickman (1957), for example, speculating on the dilemma of applying a psychology develped from the scrutiny of two-and-three-body relationships to groups, remarked, "There is perhaps -- I repeat perhaps -- a multi-body psychology, which would, if it were articulate, that is adequately conceptualized, deal with the psychological forces operative when several or many individuals are together." Whether or not a separate multi-body

psychology is called for, it is clear that role is a concept of considerable potential relevance to multi-body relationships and that such relationships cannot exist -- or be understood -- completely apart from the relationships of two or three persons.

But we begin with a terminological and conceptual gap. Thus it might be well, at the start, to raise the question of how psychoanalytically oriented writers have approached the phenomenon we have referred to as the recreation of family role relations. To be sure, one might not expect to see this occur in the traditional dyadic relationship of patient and therapist. But what have psychoanalytically oriented group workers seen and reported that bears on this question of role relations?

What one finds in the literature is an emphasis on the concept of multiple transferences, that is an extension of the notion that individuals attempt to recreate relationships with parental figures to the notion that such attempts include relationships with other family members as well. Slavson (1950) invoked the concepts of "identification transference" and "sibling transference," suggesting that in the group one sees a network of libinal, sibling, and identification transferences to the leader as well as to other group members. Though Scheidlinger (1955) criticized Slavson and others for applying the concept of transference

loosely to groups -- making the important point that the relationships one tends to observe in groups are more primitive than the object relationships the concept of transference implies -- the tendency has persisted to utilize "transference" in describing the multiple kinds of former family relationships group members attempt to recreate (see, for example, Bach, 1957; Farrell, 1962; Sugar, 1971; Ethan, 1978). Foulkes (1957) has referred to the "transference level" of group phenomena in which parental and sibling relationships are recreated. Horwitz (1977) has referred to "peer transference," and Boszormenyi-Nagy and Framo (1962) have used the term "family transference" to refer to the multiplicity of ways in which schizophrenics involve the entire hospital staff in recreating family models.

Demerest and Teichner (1954) attempted a redefinition of transference in order to include the individual's relationship with the group as a whole: "the process in which a person projects a pattern of adaptation which was learned in a previous life situation to a current life situation." Fried's (1965) reference to the "triple aspects of transference" (i.e. emotion, defense, and object)seems similarly a way of trying to account for the fact that what appears to be recreated in group settings are complex patterns of interaction. Durkin (1964) has reached the conclusion that transference is an expression of an individual's basic

character structure, and suggests that the "central defensive core seems to be best portrayed in the role which each member plays in the group."

In the literature describing the approach to group therapy that has developed in England based on the group work of Bion (1961), it is less unusual to find references to role. In part that may be because this tradition draws upon the theoretical background of the English object relations school with its emphasis on early object relations, including early oedipal conflicts. In part also it is because the emphasis in this approach is upon the interpretation of dynamics affecting the group as a whole so that role offers itself as a mediating concept, linking individual and group behavior. Ezriel (1950), for example, describing how members respond to the common group tension, observes that "every group member takes up a particular role characteristic for his personality structure because of the particular unconscious phantasy group-relations which he entertains in his mind." But even such references to role as this do not appear to be grounded upon an articulated theoretical base; Bion himself does not discuss role in Experiences in Groups (1961). Moreover, this tradition of group work does not tend to link group roles with family roles because of its rigorous use of purely "transference interpretations"; that is, patterns of role relationships are interpreted as they occur in the here

and now, without any effort at historical reconstruction of past patterns (Ezriel, 1952; Heath and Bacal, 1969). Yet the fact that those who work in this tradition, which includes an object relations approach, do use the concept of role is in itself suggestive of a useful line of approach.

This brief review of the application of the concept of multiple transferences to groups is not meant to imply that all these authors are referring to the same phenomena. Some seem to suggest, for example, that various transference manifestations involving family members are as likely to be seen sequentially as concurrently in one over-all configuration. And the whole issue of transference in groups is by no means without considerable controversy. Apart from Scheidlinger's objection to employing the concept at all to groups, there is the question that has been raised about diluted transference by those who argue that the only true transference relationships in groups are to the leader, so that apparent transference relations between or among group members are displacements or deflections of that (see Stein, 1964). This is not the place to explore these questions; a later discussion of transference will attempt to develop the concept more systematically in relation to role. The point here is simply that a number of authors have attempted in various ways to extend the psychoanalytic concept of transference to account for the phenomena observed in group

settings that individuals do attempt to repeat patterns of relationships derived from family relationships with others than as well as parental objects, and that occasionally, at least, it has seemed as if these transferences take the form of an over-all pattern, a pattern which we might usefully speak of as a set of role relationships. Thus the observations made about Arthur and Carmen are probably not unique, despite the fact that a review of the group therapy literature utilizing psychoanalytic concepts turns up few references to role or to unequivocally comparable phenomena.

It might be useful to add, in passing, that several authors do appear to have referred to similar occurances in groups in terms that steer clear of theoretical implications. Thus Berman (1950) in discussing the correspondence between a member's experience of his therapy group and his family of origin refers to the activation of "sibling rivalry constellations." And two related articles (Frank, Margolin, Nash, Stone, Varon, and Ascher, 1952; Rosenthal, Frank, and Nash, 1954) have described behavior patterns that some individuals tend to adopt in groups to attempt to deal with conflict in consistent ways. None of these authors refers to role, but the phenomena they describe could easily be recast in the language of role relations.

There is an area in the psychoanalytically oriented literature, however, where role has achieved a greater degree

of consideration and, indeed, where some beginning theoretical links have been established with traditional psychoanalytic concepts. The development of family therapy has produced work on role relations in families. In family therapy, of course, it is seldom possible to observe the tendency of family members to recreate their family roles in other settings. But it has been possible to study how roles develop in interactional processes within families and the significance they have for the process of identity formation in individual family members.

This line of thought has developed primarily out of the work done with the families of schizophrenics. Bowen (1965) and his group took the important step of seeing the family rather than the schizophrenic individual as the pathological unit, theorizing that family unity is an expression of an "undifferentiated family ego mass" which exists in all families to some extent but most prominently in the families of schizophrenics. Laing and Esterson (1964) in England took a similar step towards viewing the schizophrenic individual as serving a family function. Searles (1958) has written on the importance of the child's wish to serve a disturbed mother, while Lidz (1973) has emphasized the wish of parents, together or individually, to use the child to complete themselves.

More explicitly relevant has been the work done on the role of the schizophrenic child in the family system and the

relationship between that role and the child's development of an identity. Brody (1959), working with the Bowen group, has characterized the families of schizophrenics as having a rigid organization of roles characteristic of the assignment of parts in a medieval morality play: "the aspects of conflict which ordinarily would be within the self appear to have become externalized, now being expressed in the constellation of family roles." The problem specific to the schizophrenic member is that he possesses only the role assigned by the parents out of their narcissistic needs, a "pseudo-identity" which prevents him from assuming a full identity, characterized by Brody as "the integration of many roles." Similarly, Wynne, Ryckoff, Day, and Hirsch (1958) have observed in the families of schizophrenics that such roles as these patients fill "are not integrated into the functioning of an actively perceiving ego but come to govern the person's behavior in an automatic 'reflex' fashion." The severity of the disturbance is seen to be proportional to the patient's inability to synethesize an identity for himself out of such elements as the role he occupied in his family of origin.

Subsequently, the family approach to schizophrenia has received considerably less attention but the questions raised in that work both about the relationship between role and individual identity and about role and family structure

have been extended to families exhibiting less severe forms of pathology and often, by implication, to normal family processes. Vogel and Bell (1960) and Lomas (1961) have studied borderline conditions in patients as a function of family pressures not to assume an independent identity but, rather, maintain a family role. Ryckoff, Wynne, and Day (1959) have described this process in general terms, attempting to differentiate between normal and pathological outcomes of identity formation. Shapiro and Zinner (1971) have advanced the concept of "delineation," the communication to a family member of the mental representation others have of him, and linked it to the set of role allocations characterizing any family -- as any group -- but with particularly important consequences for adolescent identity. They and a number of the other authors who have focused on this problem often draw upon Erikson's writings on identity formation (1956, 1968), citing his observations that the "consistent roles" occupied by children contribute to identity formation, that "role experimentation" is an important aspect of adolescent experience, and that "diffusion of roles" is the pathological outcome of unsuccessful identity formation. De Levita (1966) has also written on the link between role and identity in psychoanalytic terms, suggesting that a kind of role fixation can occur in children as a result of parental ambivalence. He defines "identity as the cluster of roles

one is enacting, i.e. the psychological representation of these roles," placing himself among the other writers referred to above who view role as a constituent element of identity, though there are implied disagreements as well as vagueness among them about the mechanisms underlying role acquisition and the means by which roles cluster or synthesize into an identity.

A parallel line of inquiry has focused on role and family organization, attempting to find means of conceptualizing family dynamics as a whole rather than as the summation of individual identification processes or of pairing relationships. Spiegel (1957) has conceptualized the family as a set of reciprocal roles exhibiting equilibrium and disequilibrium and listed the processes that promote "reequilibrium" among roles. Shapiro and Zinner (1971) as suggested above, have characterized the family as a group subject to the same kind of analysis of task and covert organization outlined by Bion (1961). Much recent work in family therapy tends by and large to be less theoretically oriented or perhaps, more precisely, less concerned to establish links with psychoanalytic concepts. Thus Minuchin's structural family therapy (1975) analyzes the family system in terms of transactions among sub-systems, without focusing on such individual intrapsychic issues as identity. He does not refer to role, but it could be argued that both his work on the developmental

patterns of family life as well as his specific analyses of how children become integrated into parental subsystems (through the role of the "parental child," for example) rely implicitly on the concept of role and contribute to our further understanding of it.

In a recent contribution to a dialogue on "The Role of Family Life in Child Development" held at the 1975 Psychoanalytic Congress in London, Richter (1976) raised the question: "can one explain by means of psychoanalytical categories the overlapping structure of the family as a whole, into which the bipolar role allocations...are integrated?" As a beginning effort to answer that question he developed categories of family processes that rely heavily on various types of role allocations and sketched in the need to link further work with the social disciplines.

Thus we can see that despite the relative paucity of references to role in the literature and the rather fragmentary and suggestive references to it now and again, it has bearing on a number of important issues: the dynamic structure of families, identity formation, transference relationships, and the organization of groups. These topics call out for further exploration, an exploration which I hope will show that the concept of role can play an important clarifying and integrative function in understanding how individual development is influenced by group relations.

Before attempting to follow this line of thought, however, it would be useful to examine the concept of role more closely, differentiating the ways in which it is used and determining more closely what meanings and implications are relevant to this inquiry.

III. The Concept of Role

As we cannot begin our discussion by referring to a tradition of technical language in which role has had a place -- the situation is otherwise, as we shall shortly see in Sociology, Anthropology and Social Psychology -- let us begin by examining the meaning of role in ordinary language, the loose collection of related meanings it possesses for anyone who uses the language in its ordinary sense.

Its primary meaning, according to Webster's New World Dictionary is "a part, or character, that an actor plays in a performance;" that derives from its etymological source, rôle, a French term that refers to the roll of paper or parchment containing an actor's part. This dramaturgical usage is, of course, still widespread, especially so by analogy in those many social situations where it appears as if human behavior has a premeditated or predictable quality, as if it were following a "script." This use is intimately related to the pervasive metaphor of the "stage of life" which since the Elizabethan period has been used to express the sense that can arise in a variety of settings that life lacks the freshness and originality we ordinarily assume it has. The melancholy Jaques exclaims in As You Like It, "All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players." A detached cynicism causes him to see only the

repetitious pattern of types, to miss the spontaneous acts of individuals. The more desperate and bitter Macbeth reflects that "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, / And then is heard no more."

More recently, the theorist who has developed this dramaturgic metaphor most fully is Goffman (1956) with his analysis of public interaction as performance. For Goffman, however, public life is a stage and everyone on it an actor not because of individual attitudes towards "the presentation of self" -- which may vary considerably -- but because the smooth functioning of social life depends upon the giving and receiving of signs regarding conventional expectations that individuals have of each other. Goffman argues, we all assume roles constantly -- if often without awareness -- as part of the process of silently adjusting our behavior to avoid the danger of misperception or misunderstanding -- and, at times, of course, to promote miscommunication when that is to our advantage.

More frequently, only some or one is perceived as behaving in this premeditated, artful way, attempting to play a role rather than be their spontaneous selves. The "histrionic" quality of hysterical characters has been commonly observed and attributed to their need to cover over yet express indirectly their genuine impulses (Fenichel, 1945, p. 528).

Helen Deutsch (1942) has written of the "as if" personality whose behavior "is like the performance of an actor who is technically well trained but who lacks the necessary spark to make his impersonation true to life." Fairbairn (1940) wrote of the role playing of the schizoid individual who thus keeps himself hidden and intact, while Winnicott (1966) has introduced the term False Self to describe the social image that conceals and protects the True Self the person feels would be unacceptable to the world. In this sense of "role," a person or a group of persons imitates a former (or imagined) state of affairs, initiating a discrepancy between what is and what is represented. Thus we can speak of a gap between the person and the role -- analogous to the distinction between the actor and his character -- a gap which is a source of tension or conflict as the actor strives to replace the real with an imitation of something else.

In the techniques of role-playing, parts are enacted because that promotes a greater vividness and sense of reality regarding the situation under study in comparison with more abstract, reflective modes. But that touches on a whole area in which the "stage of life" metaphor is traditionally applied without its customary implications of falsification: the play of children. We do not accuse children of misrepresentation because while they do imitate and impersonate they do so in the service of learning. In the early stages of

development, of course, imitation has a thoroughly spontaneous, unselfconscious quality as the child simply responds to what he sees with an effort at repetition: "prolonging an interesting event" in Piaget's phrase. Later repetition becomes more deliberate and self-conscious as children take on the roles of mother and father, in playing house, the roles of doctor and patient, cops and robbers, etc. That is they do not simply attempt to reproduce a particular event or sensation but rather construct a complex interaction which they have seen before, involving several individuals playing different but interrelated parts.

There is a secondary dictionary meaning of role deriving from this primary one: "a function or office assumed by someone." It is easy to see how this has developed from the first in that we speak of assuming an office or undertaking a function in the same way we speak of an actor assuming or undertaking a part in a play. In doing so, we imply that the person takes on a set of constraints and obligations along with certain rights and privileges that are not inherent in his person and that are -- or usually are -- temporary, provisional. Thus one may take on the role of Unit Chief in a hospital or Quarterback on a football team, or assume the function of a therapist in one relationship but not in another.

In these usages of "role," there is no implication of pretence and thus no implication of a tension filled gap

between the real and the intended representation. A person who takes on the role of mother, for example, is not necessarily engaged in any misrepresentation -- though there are tribes where fathers ceremonially lie in to receive the congratulations and gifts earned by the mother, assuming a role according to our primary definition. And -- in a practice that exemplifies the correspondence between our linguistic and emotional habits -- we often tend to assume that certain functions and offices are inevitably inhabited by certain types of persons, characters or caricatures, such as the absent-minded professor, the ruthless boss, the dumb chorus girl, etc.

Roles according to this secondary meaning, however, are not so much attached to persons as they are to institutions, either formal organizations or more informal gatherings bound by tradition. A corporation will differentiate the roles of Chairman, President, Director of Personnel, stock clerk, etc. as a football team will differentiate the roles of Quarterback, Fullback, Lineman, Coach, etc. The informal institution of the family consists at the very least of the mother, father, and child roles, though at different times and in different cultures additional roles have existed such as the elder person and the role of the oldest son. Roles conceived in this way not only are attached to institutions -- often expressed as "offices" or "positions" -- but they are

also related to task or function in that each person in each role has a job to do which fits into the overall pattern of what the institution is attempting to accomplish.

An extremely common use of role has developed out of this meaning of role as function: its application to objective, non-human relations. One speaks, for example, of the role of television in American culture, the role of government, etc. Here role is almost synonymous with function but also often carries an implication of a fixed position by virtue of the fact that the function occupies a known, frequently traditional place among other related functions.

Ordinary usage, then, gives us two overlapping but different meanings of "role." On the one hand it refers to a part undertaken by a person and causes us to be aware of the discrepancy between the real person and the representation. On the other, it refers to the task or function undertaken by a person by virtue of the position he or she occupies. Role in the second sense doesn't carry the implication of pretense, but it is also true that role in the first sense doesn't necessarily carry the implication of function. A child who plays at being her mother, for example, has doubtless many motives for doing so but is not necessarily fulfilling in reality any particular maternal function in assuming the role. Role in this first sense, then, attaches to the person, like a costume. In the second, it attaches to

institutions and can, in the usage cited above, describe functions that do not directly involve persons at all.

But we can infer some common elements in these two diverging sets of usages -- and, in doing so, we can approach a rudimentary definition of the concept of role as it is used in ordinary language.

(1) The boundaries of the role and the person do not coincide. Whether the person is assuming the part of another or undertaking to fill a specific function the congruence of role and person is always provisional and incomplete. Different persons can exchange occupancy of the same role; moreover, one person can occupy more than one role. Perhaps a better way of conceptualizing this, though, is to point out that role and person are different kinds of things: a role is a construct that must be defined and implemented to exist. It is an abstraction. A person assuming a role binds himself to the limitations of that role's definition, whether that role is defined by the appearance of another or by a function. (If a function, his costume can be said to become a uniform or, as we often say, his "hat.")

(2) A role always implies the existence of at least another role and, often, a multiplicity of interrelated roles. The role of mother, for example, cannot exist without the complementary roles of father and child. Hamlet implies Gertrude, the King, the Ghost, Ophelia, etc. Leader demands

follower. Role is inherently a social construct that involves relatedness among roles.

This rudimentary concept of role has bearing on the examples of Carmen and Arthur -- if only in helping us to avoid the dilemma posed by ordinary usage of having to decide whether their roles are to be understood as adhering to their persons and involving them in a presentation (or misrepresentation) of self or, on the other hand, whether they adhere to the family organization and involve them in functions crucial to the survival or vitality of the family (or group) structure. To put it in an extreme form, is Carmen in disguise or is she at work? One might be inclined to see that both are possibilities -- even probabilities. But our rudimentary concept, before we engage in any further exploration of the specific motivations and meanings in Carmen's and Arthur's behavior, permits us to reach agreement on two basic aspects of their behavior and use the term "role" to describe it.

(1) Both have a construct or definition which they carry within them (it may be conscious or unconscious) of who they need to be and how they need to act, a construct that guides their interaction with others.

(2) Both constructs are linked with constructs that are felt to govern the behavior of others as well, that organize the significant others of the group.

This rudimentary concept provides a point of departure for our exploration of role. But the varying definitions and usages can be seen as providing significant connotations that color our use of it and imply attributes important to bear in mind.

Thus the dramaturgic implications of role provide a kind of constant suggestion of tension and even danger. Where there is representation, there is always illusion and the risk of misrepresentation. Apart from the fear of being taken in by a role there is also the allure of believing that the roles we assume ourselves or those assumed by others can replace the self. And there is the sense of threat implied by sets of role relationships that may be or may at any moment become collusions to distort or deny the truth of our "real" relatedness.

Somewhat less powerful but equally implicit in our linguistic usage is the implication that roles involve effort and work. To occupy a role is often felt to be like putting one's shoulder to the wheel, to engage in collective struggle.

Both these implications arouse the complementary hopes of life without distortion and effort -- life without roles, simple, honest, and free. The point is that these are penumbras of affect-laden associations that surround the concept of role. It is not hard to see where these associations come from. The studies of the families of schizophrenics

referred to above highlight the dilemmas of those who have roles assigned to them while being deprived of opportunities to modify those roles or gain recognition for aspects of themselves not encompassed in these roles. Similarly, work roles in institutions are felt to imply renunciation of self or a lack of recognition of one's whole person. But the limitations inherent in role relationships need not be confused with the concept itself and, more important, need not blind us to its importance.

But to understand the meaning of role more fully it will be useful to go on to an exploration of the theoretical consideration role has received in the social sciences.

IV. "Role Theory"

The concept of role has elicited a good deal of attention in Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Psychology because it seems to promise to bridge the gap between social structure on the one hand, with its traditions and functions, and individual behavior, on the other, with the individual's personal need to fit in and become a part of complex institutions. Thus a considerable body of writing -- loosely referred to as "role theory" -- has developed out of the effort to conceptualize the "fit" between individuals and institutions by linking psychological and social concepts. But that by no means implies that "role" has an agreed upon or even clear meaning in these fields. Indeed, Sarbin and Allen in their review chapter on "Role Theory" in The Handbook of Social Psychology (1968) argue that its value lies not in its precise meaning but in the fact it is "a metaphor intended to denote that conduct adheres to certain 'parts' (or positions) rather than to the players who read or recite them." Thus they seem to include the full range of ordinary uses of the term we have looked at, including on the one hand the notion of acting (imitating or performing, to use Goffman's term) and, on the other, the notion of function and office.

But it is possible to distinguish two lines of thought in the social sciences, two lines that roughly approximate the

two major sets of meanings we have delineated in ordinary usage. The classic statement for one line is Linton's (1936, p. 114). "A role represents the dynamic aspect of a status. The individual is socially assigned to a status and occupies it with relation to other statuses. When he puts the rights and duties which constitute the status into effect, he is performing a role." Related to this link between role and status and perhaps implicit in it is the notion that a role represents a social norm, an agreed upon and recognized set of behaviors and attitudes. Thus we speak of the masculine role in our society, the role of mother, the role of the teacher, principal, custodian, etc. As can be seen this draws upon the common linguistic usages of role referring to function, office, and position, adding to these meanings the idea that all of these aspects are governed by commonly accepted normative standards. Thus people can be said to know where they stand with respect to others and what to do in order to interact reciprocally and appropriately with others. Thus, too, social scientists can study these normative patterns to understand social structures.

The other line of thought in the social sciences links role with the dynamics of individual personality. Thus Mead (1934) for example defines the "self" as the sum total of the social roles assumed by the individual with respect to the "generalized Other," which is the organization and integration

of specific roles into a larger unity. For him, as for others following this line of thought, it is important to examine the developmental process to see how this "self" or "social self" or "social identity" comes into existence, as the individual learns to take his place in society. This concept draws upon the usages of role referring to imitation and play (Mead, for example, describes the development of games which involve roles and rules out of simple play which is without structure) but it also refers to normative notions of function and office absorbed into the self.

Clearly in attempting to distinguish two lines of thought we are touching on more than terminological and conceptual differences: there are crucial disagreements here regarding basic conceptions of the individual and society. There is a tendency on the one hand to see society as imposing sets of roles on basically malleable individuals, like a procrustian bed. On the other hand, there is the more mentalist, psychological view that sees individuals absorbing social information, shaping for themselves in the process a concept of "self" and of the "other" that bears the imprint of general social norms or the norms of their particular reference groups.

But, generally, there has been little effort to clarify these differences -- differences which are often simply linked with different disciplines -- and, more importantly, little effort to explore the different meanings the term "role" has

for different writers. Indeed, this has led to occasional criticisms of the concept and questions as to its value. (Neiman and Hughes, 1951) One might speculate that this lack of clarity reflects the fact that role is a linking concept to begin with, one that exists on the boundary between psychology and other "social sciences." That is, if two such broad areas are being linked by such a concept, to limit its meaning in one direction or the other may be felt to limit its usefulness, or jeopardize the linking function entirely. It might even be experienced as presumptuous to cross over the boundary into another discipline and, in effect, to limit the scope of the term's applicability thereby defining it in terms referring to one's own disciplinary interests. And, in fact, by referring to role as a useful metaphor in their review of "role theory," Sarbin and Allen appear to be taking such a position and justifying it on the grounds that role theory is as yet in its early developmental stages where inclusive, tolerant lattitude is appropriate.

In an important review article on the concept of role applied to individuals in organizational settings, Levinson (1959) called attention to a frequent tendency among social scientists to view role as a "unitary concept," that is as a concept binding individual adjustment and social structure in one presumably seamless, conflict free pattern. Frequently, he adds, the conceptions of personality implicit in this "unitary concept" are simplistic, fostering a view of

individuals as robot-like, smoothly and virtually automatically assuming their proper places, attitudes, and values in organizations as well as society as a whole. He proposes abandoning the simple term "role" and suggests, instead, employing the two concepts of "role demands" and "role definition" when attempting to study the actual "fit" between an individual and an organization.

"Role demands" comprise the external, situational pressures confronting an individual as the occupant of a given position; such demands may come from the organization's charter, traditions, policy, executives, etc. and may vary considerably in coherence, clarity, and flexibility. "Role definition" refers to how the individual assumes a particular set of functions in an organization and it can be further subdivided into role conception, i.e. the ideas and images he internalizes as part of his understanding of his role, and role performance, his actual behaviors. This approach, unlike the unitary concept, allows for the perception of stress and conflict at various points in the system: between different role demands, originating in the institution, between different role definitions (which may also take the form of conflict between role conception and role behavior) and, finally, between role demands and role definition. It is often possible to see, in analyzing instances of organizational stress, that conflicts spill over and arouse difficulties

in other areas of the over-all system of role relations.

A complementary point of view on roles in organizations has been developed by Rice (1969) in his systems approach to the study of organizations. Briefly, Rice points out that every enterprise essentially consists of three overlapping systems: the task system, devoted to the process of importing, converting and exporting whatever is essential to the survival of the enterprise; the sentient system, the individuals and groups comprising the enterprise in their role relations as well as personal relationships; the management system that attempts to regulate and integrate the boundaries of the two other systems. Complicating the typical organizational picture is the formal structure of organization itself, boundaries which may or may not coincide with the boundaries of the various task systems of the total enterprise. This is a source of considerable potential conflict as "organization is the instrument through which an enterprise assigns activities to roles and roles to individuals and groups." Thus the role occupied by an individual in an organization is subject to a variety of conflicts. To add Levinson's distinction, conflict between "role demands" and "role definition" may exist within and across any of these systems, with consequent confusion and dislocation of boundaries within the enterprise -- not to mention, of course, within the individual occupying the role.

Levinson's and Rice's concepts were developed to facilitate an understanding of roles in more or less formal organizations, but they have applicability to families and informal groups and they can shed light on our consideration of Carmen's and Arthur's behavior. The two group members are enacting "role definitions" of their own when they take their seats and interact with the other group members in the manner that feels suitable to them, given their past family and group experiences and their initial estimate of the current situation. In effect, their "role definitions" exert complementary "role demands" on each other member of the group to act in a way that confirms their ideas or at the very least to refrain from acting to undermine them. And, as it is true of every group member that his "role definition" exerts a complementary set of "role demands" on every other group member, the group must go through a complex process of adjustment and negotiation at the start so the totality of definitions and demands may be reconciled as best as possible. Some members may feel uncomfortably deprived of the opportunity to enact the role they wish; some may welcome the opportunity to risk assuming a new role for themselves. For Carmen and Arthur this negotiation did not appear to present unusual difficulties. Indeed, for Carmen, her role definition of "watcher" and "mediator" easily fit into the role demands of the other members and exerted few demands of its own. One could easily see that she might

be welcomed as a particularly "good" member because her role definition's complementary role demand on others was simply, in effect, that they allow her to listen and help when she could. (Eventually, however, that led to feelings in the group that she was avoiding risks and hiding.)

This, simplified, is the sentient system. The task system in the group, however, imposes a different set of role demands. In that system, Carmen and the other group members are clients seeking psychotherapy, and the demand of that role includes at the very minimum a reasonably frank disclosure of the difficulties that led one into therapy and an effort to expose the obstacles one feels stand in the way of change. (Obviously much more could be said about the different role demands on clients in different therapeutic enterprises; for a systems view of psychotherapy see Newton, 1973.) There is also whatever role definition of client that Carmen carries with her. The point is that these two sets of role demands and role definitions belonging to the task and sentient systems do not coincide. In Carmen's case, there is a clear tension between the role definition of "mediator" who listens to others and that of client who discloses. This discrepancy is a precise example of non-overlapping system boundaries as it leads to two sets of discordant activities. (Management, supplied in this case by the therapist-leaders, has the task of regulating the relation between the task and

sentient systems, which is normally accomplished with this kind of task by maintaining the role relations appropriate to the task system and by interpreting the discrepancies.)

Altogether these comprise the social systems which give rise to the role demands we have described. Rice extends his systems view to the individual by analogy and in the process elaborates a description of what is involved for the individual in developing a role definition. The "ego function," for Rice, is the management function of the personality with the primary task of managing the boundary between the internal and external worlds. But because individuals are complex enterprises, engaged in a multiplicity of tasks at any given moment, the "ego function" must develop a number of different roles to address these different tasks: "To take a role an individual could be said to set up a task system; and the relevant task system to require the formation of a 'project team' composed of the relevant skill, experience, feelings and attitudes. Different roles demand the exercise of different skills and different outputs. The task of the ego-function is then to ensure that adequate resources are available to form the 'project' team for role performance, to control transactions with the environment so that intakes and outputs are appropriate, and to suppress or otherwise control irrelevant activities." (Rice, 1969, p. 575) Thus, the ego function not only must manage the internal-external

(reality) boundary but also the boundaries between role and task systems and between each system and the total personality. (See Figure 1.)

Though Rice's concept is at a relatively high level of abstraction, it does begin to illuminate some of the specific dilemmas and conflicts engaged by the ego in its efforts to assume specific roles. Levinson too has made a contribution to the problem of understanding the ego's process of assuming roles, calling role definition an "ego achievement." "The formation of a role-definition is, from a dynamic psychological point of view, an 'external function' of the ego. Like the other external (reality-oriented) ego functions, it is influenced by the ways in which the ego carries out its 'internal functions' of coping with, and attempting to synthesize, the demands of id, superego, and ego. These internal activities -- the 'psychodynamics' of personality -- include among other things: unconscious fantasies; unconscious moral conceptions and the wishes against which they are directed; the characteristic ways in which unconscious processes are transformed or deflected in more conscious thought, feeling, and behavioral striving; conceptions of self and ways of maintaining or changing these conceptions in the face of changing pressures from within and from the external world."

Levinson emphasizes the ideational aspects of role definition, while Rice pays more attention to the skills and

other resources of the ego required for role behavior. (In a footnote, though, Rice acknowledges further potential complexities arising from anticipated versus realized role interactions, which seems a step towards including something like Levinson's distinction between role demands and role definition.) This may well reflect differing approaches to role theory; Rice as an industrial consultant began with the link between role and task or function, while Levinson, a psychologist, emphasizes more the link between role and self-definition. But they have in common an appreciation of the complexity involved for the ego entering into role relationships. Whether conceptualized in terms of various "project teams" or in terms of a synthetic function integrating "internal" and "external" functions, these discussions delineate what seems an awesome challenge to the ego faced with role demands: for each role it must establish new boundaries throughout the internal world of impulses, defenses, skills, objects, and self images -- not to mention reorganizing its perceptions of external reality.

I would like to suggest that the ego has developed an "archaic role definition" that functions as a kind of template, in effect, providing it with a ready-made means of organizing this complex activity in the face of a given role demand. That is, faced with the complex task of reorganization demanded by a new role relationship, the ego in accordance

with its conservative nature, responds with its old solution. It does not readily or easily form new "project teams," redrawing its internal boundaries, resynthesizing a multiplicity of functions. It calls upon an "archaic role definition" instead, in whichever situations it may seem feasible, to whatever extent it may seem possible.

There are many situations in which this template is only partially appropriate -- perhaps totally inappropriate -- and, conceivably, some situations in which it may not be called upon at all. Clearly the nature of any given role demand is important to bear in mind in attempting to assess the "pull" of the situation to elicit the individual's "archaic role definition."

On the other hand, individuals vary considerably in their flexibility and adaptability to different role demands. Some more easily than others can modify or suppress their inner templates. In addition, there are bound to be differences among individuals in the strength and coherence of their templates; our brief discussion of the concept of role applied to the families of schizophrenics suggests how damaging it can be to have a family role definition inadequately integrated into a personal identity.

What I propose to do in the chapters that follow is to explore the process by which this "archaic role definition" comes into existence in individual development and the

forces that evoke it in group situations. Levinson refers to role definition in organizational settings as an "ego achievement" so that by extension we can view the child's development of an "archaic role definition" as an early ego achievement: it bears upon the distinction between inner and outer, self and not self, and consequently on the differentiation of autoplastic and alloplastic defenses. But it is the child's engagement of the object world that will, I think, provide us with the most central area for exploration in understanding how the "archaic role definition" comes about. My hypothesis is that somewhere between the stage in which the child's relation to his primary object is governed by processes of identification and fantasies of merger and the stage in which object constancy is established, the set of inner partial objects is first established that "maps" the world of role relationships in its earliest primitive, rudimentary way. Colman (1975), using Mahler's developmental concepts, suggests that the groundwork for a child's group consciousness is laid at the end of the symbiotic phase: "The primacy of the mother/child union in the child's world of self slowly gives way to a union with multiple others within the family environment. Dyadic consciousness crystallized out of the earlier stage of merger with totality; it now gives way to group consciousness." This valuable suggestion, though, needs to be elaborated in relation to other

views of the child's developing relation to the object world, especially those of Jacobson and Kernberg. Moreover, it needs to be related to later developmental stages in order to appreciate the impact upon the "archaic role definition" of the oedipal crisis with its attendant pressures to reorganize the object world, latency with its opportunities for developing peer relationships, and adolescence.

The second topic -- the forces that activate the "archaic role definition" in group settings -- will be actually our point of departure because it is in fact here, in the adult group, that one first encounters the resurrected role definition that individuals call upon to fit themselves in. Following the suggestion originally offered by Bion and built upon by a number of others, I hypothesize that the group situation, resembling a loose collection of undefined objects such as the child experienced before object constancy was established, precipitates a regressive process in the individual which the individual attempts to stem by calling upon the "archaic role definition" as a defense. Thus, the very developmental achievement that marked the child's ability to leave behind an undifferentiated or loosely differentiated symbiotic world is invoked to defend against the threat that the world may once again become an undifferentiated mass.

As will be seen in the pages that follow, the "archaic role definition" is viewed as a core component of the identity

system but also as the most basic element for the individual in assuming any role definition. Thus, it is profoundly involved in the individual's object relationships as well as what we could call his role relationships. That, in turn, raises the question of differences and similarities between the two. We usually think that role relationships in adult life do not require of those engaged in them the recognition of 3-dimensional objects, other separate, differentiated individuals. Rather they require an ability to fit into a group and to use parts of oneself to interact with relevant parts of others. Thus, from one point of view, role relationships resemble an inferior version of object relationships, a poor substitute. From another point of view, however, role relationships are essential to human society in that they are the means by which individuals combine to work. Committees, teams, task forces, factories, organizations, and institutions all demand competent and adaptive functioning among individuals who can be said to have the capacity not to enter into full object relations with each other.

This presents, then, something of a paradox -- but one which it is the underlying purpose of this exploration to attempt to elucidate.

V. The Group Members

The therapy group to which Arthur and Carmen belonged and which will be used to illustrate and guide the theoretical explorations that follow was composed of a total of 6 members. It met one evening a week for 25 weeks in a format designed to permit alternately the exploration of group and individual dynamics. That is, it convened at the start of each evening as a study group, modelled on the method described by Bion (1961) and Rice (1965), with the male and female co-therapists assuming the roles of consultants to the group, focused on the group task of understanding the covert group forces shaping the behavior of the group as a whole. After a brief break the group reconvened to discuss and work on material that had emerged for or was made available by individual members.

The material illustrating group process that follows is drawn entirely from the study group portions of these sessions. Although the second portion of each evening's session, devoted to individual issues, also provided evidence of group dynamics, the material will be used primarily to assist in reconstructing the family picture for each member -- along with addition material provided in the initial interview (in which a brief family history was taken) and subsequent individual sessions with one or both of the co-therapists. That information will necessarily be somewhat sketchy

and lacking in the first hand clarity and immediacy of the member's group behavior in the here and now. Still, the group with its dual focus on group dynamics and individual dynamics and history provides an exceptional opportunity to examine parallels and explore patterns of behavior common to its members' group and family life.

Carmen and Arthur have already been introduced in a manner that sketches in broadly their family situations and the parallels that are most striking between their family and group roles. In the concluding portion of this introduction I would like to introduce similarly three other members of the group: Louise, Bruce, and Jose. (Names and other identifying information, of course, have been altered to protect the identity of the group members. The sixth member did not wish to have her data used in this study.)

José, of hispanic background, like Carmen, had not grown up in New York but in the country of his birth where he had been the youngest of five children, with 2 sisters and 2 brothers (one of whom had died at an early age). Now in his mid-30's he lived with another man in a homosexual relationship that had lasted several years. He had a professional occupation.

Groups, he reported in his initial interview, had always been difficult for him: "I will find a place," he said, "but it will cost me" -- and his experience in the

group bore that out. At times he took a daring role, becoming the first to speak or to bring up a difficult subject, but he also frequently found it hard to participate and reported to the group that he did a great deal of "work" on the group and himself between sessions, alone. This in and out pattern was not without significance for the group, however, as became apparent at a relatively early session when he was absent and other members began to imagine -- quite incorrectly, they quickly acknowledged -- that others among them were seething with unexpressed rage. That was José's role -- to bear the rage of the group -- and it helped to explain the group interest in promoting his oscillation in and out depending on its wish to have it present or dismiss it entirely. Further probing made it apparent that José's rage was directed at the female consultant and that, for José, she too seemed to fade in and out of his awareness. That is, much of the time he succeeded in dismissing her from his mind but that her interventions -- almost always experienced by him as unhelpful if not hostile -- provoked him back into consciousness of her and of his rage. His feelings towards the male consultant were more constant and positive but tempered by the sense that he lacked the power to contain the ominous female authority.

José reported that his mother was also an obscure figure, hard for him to grasp. He described her as "sacrificial and

persevering" -- in sharp contrast to his father whom he described vividly as "proud and angry," a man who had combined for José love and sexuality, whose company he treasured, but who had been away during much of his childhood. His early life he felt had been spent in a kind of limbo, deprived of his father's company, and also of opportunities to play with his older brother and sisters in any dependable way; thus, he felt isolated in his family, without a recognizable position despite his efforts repeatedly to make a place for himself. The pattern seemed to be continued in the group where he thrust himself forward, boldly, but only to question whether he had done the right thing, and then withdraw, battling throughout with powerful feelings evoked by the shadowy but awesome female object.

Bruce, the third male in the group and the one only child, carried a relatively simple group in his head. At the center was the overwhelming presence of a powerful female authority, whom he felt to be unshakeable and with whom he felt confident of having a special bond. Thus, he was able to assume a passive stance, watching the group form around him and his primary object and waiting to be enticed into participation; "Come and get me," he once verbalized as his characteristic message to the group. Two additional objects came into focus: a woman who became the repository of his negative feelings and a man to whom he reacted with

hostility as a rival. The second woman, it became clear, was not always necessary as there were occasions on which he could direct the fears and disappointments aroused by his primary object directly at her rather than at a secondary satellite. The male consultant was experienced as a rival consistently; his comments were frequently challenged or criticized and he was felt to be weak and ineffective -- a rival, that is, who did not seem to pose much of a challenge to his secure and favored position. Others in the group were also experienced as rivals from time to time. Otherwise, they seemed to be relegated to a cloudy, peripheral circle of semi-existence.

A graduate student in his mid-20's, Bruce no longer lived at home with his parents but did visit them frequently and continued to receive some financial assistance from them. Clearly, he had been and was still an object of considerable attention at home. He described his father as "passive and docile," his mother as ever present for him but also "intrusive, extended" -- clear prototypes for his primary male and female objects in the group. But his description implies some identification with his father as well and suggests that in his family, as he saw it, he and his father occupied analogous positions with respect to the powerful maternal object. He reported that at home characteristically he maintained an indifferent, inexpressive facade, concealing his feelings

so that his parents sought him out more intensely to devote even greater attention. He also spoke of his fear that any efforts at "self assertion" on his part would destroy the family system, as if his comfortable, receptive and withholding position in the family not only protected him from risk but guaranteed the security of the entire object world surrounding him and sustaining his passive comfort.

Louise, a physician in her mid-30's, pursued a role in her family as mother surrogate. She reported that as the eldest of 4 she had been needed by her mother to help care for the children who had been born in quick succession and had led to post-partum depressions. At the same time she felt unappreciated by her mother who was really devoted to the men in her life, first the father and then a step-father. But Louise persisted in her assigned role, despite what must have been resistance on the part of her siblings. She became adept at speaking out and providing support when required while also coming to be viewed in her family as a bit "crazy" -- no doubt in response to her having taken on with such energy, a task which she herself in occasional outbursts would recognize as unwanted, unappreciated, and self-defeating.

Nonetheless, Louise continued to pursue the role in the group: provoking, supporting, speaking out in order to keep the group together and functioning as she felt the consultants wished it to. What kept her going in this role gradually

became clear: her never-renounced wish for a bond with her maternal object on whose behalf she felt she acted in caring for and maintaining the family. Thus, in the group she consistently aligned herself with the female consultant, treasured her comments as if freighted with a personal significance intended for her alone, but treasured her silence even more in which she could imagine an almost palpable connection between them. Indeed, so powerful was her wish to preserve and support this "good mother" -- despite the perpetual frustration and bitterness to which it gave rise -- that she was willing to become the group's bad maternal object and in so doing take upon herself the anger and criticism directed at the female consultant, preserving her good mother at the price of reinforcing her own image in the group as the "crazy" one.

The men in the group played a particular role for her in this pattern -- as they had in her family. She saw them as needy and thus responsive to her maternal, caring side; but she also saw them as demanding and willing to exploit her. Several times she expressed the fear she was being abused by the men in the group, "sucked dry," and she responded with anxiety and hostility. They, of course, received much of the blame for the attention she felt was lavished on them by her mother -- blame she would not direct at her mother. But also she opened herself up to the fear of

being "sucked dry" by the very fullness with which she embraced the role of surrogate mother, the lack of restraint she experienced in fulfilling its demands. The entire family -- and group -- system conspired with her own needs to use her up, but it was the men who were explicitly assigned the role of devouring infants who would stop at nothing to gain sustenance from her.

These are the individuals who together comprised the group. I realize that the descriptions are given for the most part without much supporting evidence. Moreover, the account provided of each person's role in the group and the function of that role for others relies to some extent on some concepts yet to be developed and, therefore, at this stage they may have puzzling aspects. But I feel it is better to run the risk of some premature disclosure and conceptual puzzles in order to attempt to make vivid the individuals whose experience will be used illustratively in the papers that follow. The reader, I hope, will be able to "join" the group more readily as a result and receive the unfolding theoretical discussions and descriptions without distortion and with greater use.

CHAPTER ONE:

REGRESSION IN GROUPS

I. Theoretical Contributions

Substantial agreement exists that individuals undergo regression in groups. That is, they tend to revert to less mature and responsible forms of behavior or less intelligent and critical thought processes. But how to account for that process and, even, how to define the extent or depth of it have been subjects of considerable theoretical dispute.

Freud in his Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (1921) described the manifest signs of this regression as twofold: a heightened emotionality, including an increased susceptibility to the spread of emotions in groups, and a decrease in the individual's level of intellectual functioning. He explained this as caused by the reactivation of oedipal conflicts in groups around the figure of the leader. Members of the group become united as "rebellious sons" by virtue of their common wish to overthrow the father-leader. At the same time, the father leader becomes the group's collective "ego-ideal" (by which Freud may mean, more broadly, "super-ego"). Thus, members lose their developed individuality in two important ways. Their common instinctual wish against the leader promotes an identification of each with each; and this seems to explain the amplification of emotions in groups as repressed, unconscious aggressive impulses and fears are reinforced and sanctioned within the group, becoming more and more likely to gain expression. Secondly, by

incorporating a common "ego ideal," group members give up to some extent their distinctive, individual capacities for moral judgment and regulation. As in the oedipal conflicts lived through by individuals, according to Freud, the "ego ideal" (or "super ego") is evoked and strengthened to cope with the arousal of instinctual energies. In the group, however, where these conflicts are relived by members regressively and to some extent anonymously, this situation now provides a fertile field for manipulation by the leader who can use the power derived from his position as the "ego ideal" and his sense of the group's instinctual anxiety to achieve his own ends, somewhat like a hypnotist.

Bion in Experiences in Groups (1961) argues that Freud's theory of group regression centered on the leader accounts for only a limited range of group phenomena. For him, the group regression is more profound, to part-object, preoedipal object relationships -- the prototype being the infant's relationship to the breast -- with the consequence that the group arouses in the individual anxieties of a psychotic nature which activate primitive defenses.

The essential point for Bion is that the group is perceived as an object in itself: "The belief that a group exists, is an essential part of this regression, as are also the characteristics with which the supposed group is endowed by the individual." (1961, p. 127) Here Bion is referring

to the commonly made observation that the group becomes in the minds of its members an entity in its own right, with a boundary that includes or excludes members. Thus, members will suddenly begin speaking in the first person plural or refer to the fact that they feel they "belong to" or are "a part of" a group, often attributing specific qualities, intentions, etc., to the group entity. That these are not mere verbal conventions is amply demonstrated by attitudes and fantasies held by group members of being protected or nourished by the group, or threatened. The prototypical experience, according to Bion, is the child's encounter with the mother's body. "My impression is that the group approximates too closely, in the minds of the individuals composing it, to very primitive phantasies about the contents of the mother's body." (1961, p. 147)

In effect, then, according to Bion, the act of perceiving the group as a group is in itself a regressive fantasy of a primitive object relationship, one that Bion, following Klein, sees as giving rise to a plethora of fantasies regarding the infant's part-object relationships, hence to "psychotic anxieties" and primitive defensive maneuvers characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position. But Bion points out that the group as a whole has defensive maneuvers available to it to cope with its members' psychotic anxiety above and beyond those available to individuals, what he

characterizes as "basic assumptions." These are, in effect, alternative fantasies that structure the group in some commonly agreed on way, thus serving to blot out the more terrifying and chaotic fantasies assailing individual members, and seeming to offer the group a way out, as it were, of its anxiety. The basic assumptions -- dependency, fight/flight, and pairing -- attempt to provide a common set of objects in the form of leaders and mode of discharge, though as Bion points out these secondary formations are inherently unstable so that the group restlessly shifts among basic assumptions in its defensive quest.

It follows then, for Bion, that "the leader is as much the creature of the basic assumption as any other member of the group." (1961, p. 161) And this is a fundamental disagreement with Freud who, as we saw above, viewed the dynamics of the group as beginning with the group's perception of the leader as an oedipal object representing an idea or program. "The leader, on the basic-assumption level, does not create the group by virtue of his fanatical adherence to an idea, but is rather an individual whose personality renders him pecularily susceptible to the obliteration of individuality by the basic-assumption group's leadership requirements." (1961, p. 161) That is, he is allowed to be leader because the group needs an object that it can use for its defensive purposes. And Bion goes further to make the important point,

again following Klein, that the mechanism that permits the group to use the leader defensively is projective identification: the leader is a repository for the frightening and unwelcome parts of members' experience -- or of their strength -- which they wish to dispose of but not lose contact with. Thus, insofar as the leader accepts the projections and the group members can agree on a common use of the object, the fantasy of the leader's leadership is given credence and plausibility and the fact of "leadership" emerges in the group.

Bion, except for his view of leadership, tended to see Freud's analysis not as inaccurate but as insufficiently comprehensive. That is, he took pains to suggest that one would see in groups frequently the dynamics that Freud pointed to but, he argued, that underneath one would always see as the driving forces of the group the primitive fantasies and defenses of part-object relations. And his insight regarding the group as a preoedipal object has won broad acceptance among those who have addressed the question of group dynamics in psychoanalytic terms, along with the corollary view that Freud's analysis needs to be enlarged to account for the preoedipal object ties that thus are evoked. But there has been considerable difference about the nature of those preoedipal ties and, consequently, the kind of regressive phenomena likely to be seen.

Klein's view of the earliest part-object ties has, of course, been a major issue as it has been widely criticized as presupposing a degree of concreteness and specificity in the infant's perceptions and fantasies that virtually requires the notion of innate ideas. Thus, when Bion speculates that the group evokes primitive fantasies about the contents of the mother's body, he is drawing upon Kelin's idea that those fantasies include the presence of the father's penis (including the concept of coitus), unborn babies, and urine and feces as poisonous substances; moreover, she has emphasized the central role of aggressive, sadistic impulses in the child's earliest object relations and the role of such primitive defenses as splitting and projective identification in the child's earliest efforts to cope with these overwhelming experiences. The issue, then, for those who have accepted the view of the group as the preoedipal mother is, if Klein's view of how the infant attempts to cope with that object is rejected, what view of early object ties can take its place and still account for the regressive phenomena observed in groups.

But there is another, underlying dilemma: agreement about what actually is to be observed. Thus, even among those who accept the notion that the group evokes the preoedipal mother, there has been a frequent tendency to empty the experience of the more frightening and bizarre aspects

Bion has emphasized, and to see instead that level of group experience in relatively benign terms. Schindler (1951, 1952, 1966) for example, early made the suggestion that the group is equated with the mother in the minds of its members, equivalent to the supportive and encompassing role of "society" which, he argued, is also viewed essentially in maternal terms. More recently, Ruiz (1972) has suggested that group members unconsciously wish to maintain an image of an ideal, nurturing group. In a series of important papers, Scheidlinger (1955, 1968, 1974) has attempted to provide a theoretical basis for this point of view. He makes a sharp distinction between the more advanced, essentially oedipal object ties and transference relationships to be seen in groups with respect to the leader and other members and the more primitive processes linking members to the group as a whole in which members are perceived in an undifferentiated way. Thus, the relationship to the group is not an object tie at all -- or part-object relationship as Bion views it -- but rather the source of generalized feelings of well-being or trust such as Erikson postulates as the developmental achievement of the first oral stage. Scheidlinger argues that the more primitive processes provide the basis for "the sense of support, of protection, of belonging which therapists consciously foster" (1955) and which makes groups a positive experience for members.

In a more recent article, Scheidlinger (1974) has attempted to bring his theory more in line with recent object relations developments in psychoanalysis. Reiterating the by now standard criticism of Klein's (and, by implication, Bion's) view of early object relations, he cites Jacobson to point out that the child requires some rudimentary ego development before being able to experience object relations, and he goes on to refer to Anna Freud's concept of the "need-satisfying relationship" falling developmentally between the stage of primary narcissism and the achievement of object constancy. He now argues that what he had referred to as the group members' wish for identification with the mother group can be understood as a yearning for a return to the need-gratifying relationship. But he reiterates that "the symbiotic 'mother-group' is accordingly perceived in purely positive, nonconflictual terms."

In effect, then, Scheidlinger acknowledges the importance of understanding group experience in terms of developing object relations, calling on Jacobson and Anna Freud to fill in a theoretical gap. On the other hand, he does little more than label the stage of object tie and he continues to blot out a whole range of frightening, hostile, and anxious experiences in groups that arise in members with respect to the process of joining the group entity, experiences which his references to object relations theory by themselves might suggest.

More recently, Saravay (1975, 1979) has elaborated a "revised psychoanalytic model of group psychology" from a structural point of view, utilizing Jacobson's work on the developmental role of structural identifications. In his view, the pressure for drive discharge to the bewildering, complex group promotes a regression in the ego to the earliest form of object tie, i.e. that stage before self and object representations have been securely distinguished. This experience of merger in turn promotes a regressive dedifferentiation of the ego and super-ego with a consequent need to reproject or externalize the object representations internalized within superego identifications. Thus, the leader becomes the object onto whom the representations are reprojected and toward whom the associated instinctual wishes are redirected. In short, the group entity promotes a regressive process that projections onto the leader stabilize. But in emphasizing the structural aspects of this process, Saravay neglects the nature of the maternal or undifferentiated merged object that is evoked in group members -- or, more precisely, he seems to follow Scheidlinger's assumption that the fantasy of merger is essentially benign, ruled by libidinal drives, with the frightening and/or frustrating object representations reprojected onto the leader in a rather smooth recapitulation of ideal development. He does not explore the possible vicissitudes of object representations and associated fantasies

cathected with aggressive energy that have been repressed or subject to a combination of denial and repression; nor does he seem to feel the need to explore the utilization by groups of the more primitive, desperate and semi-effectual defenses that impressed Bion in his examination of group experience.

Bion's view of the function of leadership suggests a possible explanation of these different perceptions. If the role of the leader is to help the group defend against anxiety aroused by primitive part-object relations, it follows that the group leader may easily be induced to collude with the group in that defense, especially if he is predisposed to reassure the group of his own conviction, i.e. that the group is to be perceived in "purely positive, non-conflictual terms" and if he is willing to serve as the repository of the group's split off hostile and frightened feelings. As Jaques (1955) has pointed out, supporting Bion's perception of the psychotic-like anxieties to be observed in groups, the need for defenses is so great that it becomes in itself a powerful source of unity, binding members together at least as firmly as any libidinal tie.

Further support for the view that an important aspect of group experience is of a frightening preoedipal object has come from a number of others -- most notably Slater (1966), Durkin (1964), and Gibbard and Hartman (1973) -- who have also

attempted to provide explanatory concepts. Slater, whose speculations are wide ranging across Freudian, Jungian, and Piagetian psychology as well as anthropology and mythology -- suggests that the issue for group members at the start is boundary confusion: confronted with a large, vaguely differentiated entity that "echoes" back their largely unconscious, common apprehensions, members are threatened with the loss of individual boundaries to which they tend to respond with Bion's fight/flight basic assumption. Slater argues that this is the most primitive, developmentally earliest defensive process, and it initiates a process of increasing the strength and clarity of personal boundaries so that members of groups evolve into increasingly differentiated individuals for each other. He cites Neumann's (1954) discussion of the mythological fight between the hero (as ego) and dragon (as maternal object) to suggest both the primitive and terrifying aspects of this struggle for group members as they must recapitulate the momentous struggles of individual development anew within the group.

Durkin (1964) in a sensitive critique of Freud's oedipal (and, hence, paternal-centered) group theory, makes a similar point: "In our group members there comes to light, not only the need to submit but also the opposite need to fight for identity of existence and for control against the mother's power." (p. 89) She traces neglect of this aspect of group

experience to Freud's emphasis on libidinal ties in the group and recalls the importance of aggression (though linking it with a fear of and a drive for power). The developmental process regressively evoked she locates "during that early period of transition from primary narcissism to the acceptance of reality" (p. 83) and she refers to the splitting of the maternal object and introjection of the split images as the processes by which members once again attempt to come to terms with the preoedipal mother group (invoking Anna Freud's concept of identification with the aggressor to account for the introjection of the harsh maternal image as part of super-ego formation). She then goes on to suggest that these introjects are projected onto the leader who is then perceived variously as the good and bad maternal object and welcomed as a defense against members' fears of the group entity or feared and defended against by a variety of individual and group strategies.

Durkin's view is thus close to Bion's, although she appears to differ with him about the fears evoked in the regressive process to primitive object relations, emphasizing the loss of individual identity and various, non-specific fears of the mother's power (as befits her view of the earliest object tie to a vague but powerful entity). But her account of the developmental timetable regressively evoked in the group is also vague -- an issue that is more directly

addressed by Gibbard and Hartman (1973) in an important paper on the fantasy of the utopian group. Taking as their point of departure the positive group experience of the symbiotic preoedipal mother -- the experience of the group that for Scheidlinger was the full story of members' tie to the group as a whole -- they attempt to locate that experience along a continuum of early object relations: the utopian group, similar to the preoedipal mother and associated with all her gratifications, falls "midway between a 'primitive' group structure, characterized by an absence of differentiation and/or by intense and disruptive hostility, and a more 'advanced' group structure, in which heterosexual attraction and rivalry overshadow any semblance of solidarity and harmony." They go on to suggest, then, that this "good" group can serve as a defense against the "primitive, 'bad' (engulfing and/or sadistic) group" which is a fantasy of the 'bad' mother as well as against the "fully heterosexual, oedipal group (which is no longer so clearly equated with the mother)."

This developmental perspective draws upon Slater's reformulation of Bion's basic assumptions in terms of increasing boundary definition: from the most primitive merger fantasy (producing fight/flight), through symbiotic, overlapping boundaries (producing the utopian group based on the basic assumption of dependency), to the establishment of gender boundaries (with the basic assumption of pairing). And it

seems to accord with Bion's view that each basic assumption is a defense and also that basic assumptions can alternate defensively -- though in postulating such a clear cut developmental sequence they seem to be suggesting that the basic assumption configurations are more stable (and perhaps even evolutionarily necessary) than Bion seems to think. (In a subsequent article they warn against thinking of this process in purely linear terms (Hartman and Gibbard, 1974)).

A number of broad areas of agreement are to be found in these accounts as well as several problematic and obscure issues. Groups, somehow, stimulate a regression in their members back to the developmental stage preceding self-object differentiation and object constancy. For Bion, the stage is conceptualized as one of unstable, fantasied part object relations. If we discard that particular view -- though retaining his understanding of the regression as profound and evocative of primitive anxieties and defenses -- and try to conceptualize developing object relations as paralleling the development of psychic structure, we find substantial agreement among the writers reviewed above: the group member is faced with the task of relating to an amorphous, potentially inclusive, vagely differentiated object reminiscent and evocative of the stage of early object relationship when he just began to distinguish self perceptions from perceptions of the object. What stimulates the regressive process and how

it is possible for a part or parts of the ego to be so profoundly regressed while functioning normally in other respects -- these are important questions, crucial to our understanding of the process, that will have to be addressed below.

Colman (1975), using Mahler's developmental scheme, locates the developmental phase of group consciousness at the start of the separation-individuation period; at that point the "stranger-reaction" develops in the infant indicating that there is a boundary that exists around his world of father, mother, siblings, etc., who are linked with him and mother before he has a sense of his own distinct and separate identity, a boundary that sets off this "group" from an outside of unfamiliar objects who do not belong to him. The authors we have discussed do not locate the developmental phase so precisely and do not necessarily include in it the child's perception of the other family members, but they are in general agreement that it is a stage preceding self-object differentiation and object constancy and thus still holding for the child the promise and threat of merger.

Thrown back into the kind of object ties of that developmental stage, the child experiences anxiety. Here, there is substantial disagreement, from those like Scheidlinger who see no anxiety at all to Bion and Jaques who see psychotic anxiety. For Bion, as we have seen, the anxiety is of that intense a degree because of the primitive part-object fantasies

evoked in the group member regarding the contents of the mother's body. For those whose view of the child's developing object relations does not include such concrete fantasies or such seemingly well defined part objects, the anxiety is of a different kind. Durkin sees the anxiety as deriving from two sources. First is the individual's loss of identity which, it would seem, is a consequence of the regressive experience itself as higher order ego achievements are discarded or overthrown. This would accord with Saravay's structural view of regression in which components of internal structure become unbound, though he does not address the structure of identity formation. The second source of anxiety is the child's perception of the mother's overwhelming power which, presumably, is viewed by the child and the group member as having paranoid, persecutory potential. One can easily see, of course, how the two sources of anxiety would reinforce each other as psychic dedifferentiation would release impulses and weaken higher order defenses that would make a stable object world more necessary and sought after. Correspondingly, the amorphous object throws the ego back on its own impoverished resources. Slater's view seems comparable: the loss of boundaries around the individual self is a source of anxiety, and thus could be understood to refer to the loss of the differentiated self-image in the ego. But Slater also implies that the process of establishing and losing boundaries

for the developing child as well as group members is a process fraught with anxiety each step of the way as the individual must conquer his fear of the menacing maternal object. Presumably, Gibbard and Hartman have a similar view, though their reference to the general concept of "ego state distress" to include all kinds and levels of psychological discomfort (including depression) seems to obscure the issue.

But despite these differences, there is considerable agreement that, whatever the source or kind of anxiety experienced, group members attempt to defend themselves against it in relatively primitive ways. That follows from the nature of the object world that seems to be present. Amorphous, undifferentiated, the object world demands the most rudimentary structure to keep anxiety at bay. Projection helps to get rid of the anxiety by establishing a boundary between self and other, while splitting attempts to distinguish between the "good" reassuring and providing object and the "bad" menacing and depriving object. In addition, Jaques -- following Klein -- distinguishes between projective and introjective identification as ways the infant and the group member have of maintaining links with the "good" and "bad" object as well as rudimentary differentiation.

We are in a position, now, to review the actual experience of the group as it came together for the first time. That review will allow us to seek out confirmation for what

appears to be the consensus view of the regressive process in groups, as well as to shed light on the problematic issues: what initiates the regressive process and what anxieties are aroused by it or as a consequence of it.

II. The First Session

After a brief introduction to the management details of the group and its format, the two group leaders announced that the study group would begin and assumed the role of consultants; that is, they became silent and began to observe the behavior of the group. Several minutes of silence, then, were interrupted by José who spoke about his effort to clarify in his mind what he wanted from the group experience which he linked with the effort to become a group member; he said he was "trying to find a line to pursue in the group." Several times, he mentioned his anxiety, and he concluded his opening statement by adding, "As I talk I become more relaxed."

Arthur responded by saying that José's having spoken first made him feel better, adding after a short pause, "I was anticipating how the group would begin becoming a group -- what that could require of me." Bruce then spoke about how hesitant he felt to define himself in such an unformed situation, preferring to have the group form around him so that he could then "plug in." In a barely audible voice, another group member verbalized her intense anxiety -- indicated, she said, by palpitations -- unable to determine if the silence or the talking in the group made her more anxious -- to which Jose responded, sympathetically, that he couldn't stand the silence either, "for good or bad" by which he explained he

meant that he didn't know if his initial statement, which was in response to his own anxiety, was good or bad for the other group members. Carmen then said that she had wondered who would break the silence: "Am I the initiator? Who is, here?"

Each of the five members who have spoken at this point feels like an outsider, facing the dilemma of getting "in," which quickly becomes their common link. In speaking they assert as well as display each one's sense of a differentiated self; each member has his or her own way of joining. José heroically plunges in, looking for a line to pursue and then wondering if he has not perhaps harmed the group in so doing. Arthur, grateful for the chance to be second, wonders what the group will require of him, while Bruce passively waits for the moment to plug in. Carmen, detachedly, poses the question of leadership but in terms that appear at least to refer to the group's now past history of silence. For each member the group exists as a forbidding entity, a vague but compelling and demanding source of anxiety, one they need to get into but one also that needs to be defined and structured so that the anxiety they experience will be diminished. Thus, although one member wonders if silence or talking produces more anxiety, there is agreement that "the silence" embodies the anxiety of the group and is to be kept at bay. Indeed, in response to José's speculation that perhaps

it would have been better had he not spoken, the others all express relief at his achievement and fear of how hard it would have become had the silence continued longer. In addition, then, to this effort to isolate "the silence" as the source of anxiety, there is a complementary effort to establish a central figure in the group, "the initiator" who represents the common attributes required of members to fight "the silence," their identification with the heroic aspect of José.

This achievement, however, gives way to another pause, which is broken by Arthur making analogies between the group and a party where the task is to get to know each other. This effort to reinforce the split between the informal, and chatty party group and the dread silent group, however, gives way to Bruce's response that, unlike a party, there are two people present "who aren't a part of what we are." This ominous reminder of the two consultants checks the premature effort to create a relaxed group, but it has the effect of suddenly drawing a firm boundary around the group by excluding the consultants who now become the explicit and concrete embodiment of "the silence," the source of the group's anxiety. Arthur immediately observes that they're "not contributing" while Carmen points out, cautiously, that "any unknown, amorphous situation is threatening." Bruce then goes on to refer to the one group member who hasn't

spoken yet, Louise, and attributes the most leadership potential in the group to her: experiencing "fantasies about the unknown...who could lead," he says, "I give you [Louise] more potential for leadership, and I give you [Arthur] least because I know you best. And for myself -- so much of me is unknown to me -- could be promising, leadershipwise."

In effect, Bruce proposes a restructuring of the group in accordance with his own internal needs. A firm boundary around the good group now -- albeit one that encourages the concretizing and acknowledgement of paranoid fantasies regarding the consultants -- permits him to fantasize about the primary object he wishes to have present, a strong woman on whom he can depend and who may even be expected to impart some of her power to him.

After a short pause, José responds with some feeling to Bruce's move to see the group his way: "I guess if you can find someone to follow, you might be able to find a leader. But if you don't find anyone to follow, then you're stuck. What I'm looking for is like a space in the group. It's like being in the subway, in a way; I know I have to find a space, and I know I have to take some risks and I have to sweat this space. But then after that I want to feel at ease in the group. That's something that when I'm in the group, or outside, part of these things I'm working at -- or in my job -- like making my own thing, there.

People around me either respect me or allow me to have some space to breathe and to live. I don't want to lead no one or to be led by no one. If I want to agree with something, then I have to come from my own agreeing."

In this initial phase, being in the group is like jostling for space in the crowded, impersonal subway, as José sees it, a battle of each against all to gain a minimal sense of security. If the group were structured as Bruce proposes, he feels he would not have the space or structure he requires. On the contrary, he fears being stifled -- unable to breathe -- in Bruce's group. Indeed, somewhat disengenuously, he disclaims any wish to lead or be led, to assert his needs in the group, so strongly does he feel about Bruce's proposal to exclude the consultants and set up Louise as the central object to gratify dependency wishes. Arthur, then, takes José's metaphor of the subway, and attempts to minimize the conflict that has suddenly arisen inside the group; he says he doesn't feel so badly about squeezing somebody else's space; space has to be respected. Bruce replies that if others will suffer from having their space encroached upon, it's "not likely one will lie down and play dead," meaning that a struggle is likely to ensue.

At this point, the female consultant made a brief intervention (about the men representing the issue of space) to which Arthur responded with considerable relief: "I was

just reminded that if people in this group intend to play dead there are other influences that will stir them up." And he went on to say he saw "the role of the consultant to encourage us to go on." Bruce responded by asking if Arthur thought the consultants could bring back the dead, and another member questioned if to be silent is to be dead. Arthur replied: "I was responding to what Bruce said. If I take up too much room I don't expect people to roll over and play dead. Would anyone mind if I smoke?"

Arthur's relief and the stimulation he received to expose his fantasy is clearly in response to the consultant's intervention. He feels now they will assert their power to combat the silence and thus they belong to the group or, at the very least, are reliably adjacent to it. This is all the more important now as conflict and aggression have surfaced within the group and Arthur doubts the group's ability to contain it. But the references to "playing dead" suggest that, underneath, Arthur is relieved that the consultants themselves are alive, i.e. their withdrawal was only part of their role, and, moreover, that they have not been "killed off" by the group's assertion of control over its own boundary, i.e. they won't die "if I take up too much space."

Emboldened by his new sense that the group's (and his) aggression will be contained by the resussitated consultants, he went on to ask permission to smoke. This is his claim to

breathing space, under the conditions he requires. A member objected, however, at which point Louise uttered her first remark: "You can still do it...it doesn't have any power over you." Arthur quietly replied, "It does," and the group went on to discuss how much warmer it's gotten in the room, not without self-conscious laughter at the double meaning; nevertheless, Bruce got up and opened a window. Jose spoke of his feeling that members don't dare antagonize the group but that he also doesn't wish to be "too pleasant" or "too cautious."

The exchange over smoking now has made clear the struggle over "breathing space": whose version of the group structure will prevail? The member who objected to Arthur's smoking, encouraged by her success as well as by José's questioning her now about what she'd like to do with the group, speaks of the obligation she feels "to get things going" but also her opposing wish to just "sit back" and let others do it -- a wish which is, once again, complementary to José's more active, solicitous role in the group.

At this point, the male consultant comments that the group seems to be encouraging women to take on leadership roles, a remark that precipitates a discussion about the impact of the consultants' interventions. Carmen says they change the flow of what's going on, while Bruce and Arthur report they feel the comments are disapproving. This

discussion makes it clear the the consultants now are felt to be part of the group, looked to for guidance and approval. The paranoid, persecutory role that had been proposed for them earlier, outside the boundary, has given way to an internalized super-ego function, doubtless under the pressure of anxiety over aggression that Arthur responded to and went on to represent for the group. Interestingly, Arthur suddenly now addresses Louise to say he feels strongly her leadership potential but also that she's judging, which makes him angry. This, of course, exactly parallels his perception of the consultants, except that Louise receives the affective response displaced from them. Clearly, Arthur, wishing to get the consultants into the group to protect it against its own aggression, wishes to preserve them from at least his own aggression as well and, so, proposes Louise as the alternative "bad" leader to safely receive the group's hostility. In doing so, it should be noted, he builds on Bruce's earlier fantasy of Louise's leadership potential.

Arthur's move produces a prolonged silence, broken by an observation about the power and powerlessness of silence which seems designed to restore the topic of silence and defuse aggression directed at any particular members. The female consultant, then, comments that the group members appear to be afraid to "move in" because of having then to

discover how powerful or powerless they really might be -- to which Louise responded excitedly with a lengthy statement. She exclaimed her amazement at having been in an unaccustomed observer role and the tremendous pressure that gave rise to from the group who referred to her as dead, not human, etc., while she saw herself as being in fact an unusually alive and responsive person. She then offered her observations about how she felt individual group members responded to her and concluded her outpouring with a humorous reference to the fact that she now seemed unable to stop talking. In response to Bruce's asking what sprang her, she said she felt the female consultant's remark had been directed at her.

Two members then spoke in praise of the idea of "trying new behaviors" in the group, clearly supportive of Louise's rejoining the group and suggesting, in fact, a new idea of heroism which, at the very least, would retract Arthur's suggestion of Louise as the "bad" leader. But Louise responded by pointedly asking Arthur what he would propose to do, to which Arthur replied in a subdued voice that he didn't know. The male consultant then commented that the group seemed to encourage women to take on the role of initiator to which the men would then or would not respond. Bruce challenged that interpretation by citing Louise's request to Arthur to say what he wanted, to which Louise responded:

"So either we have some very docile men in this group (laughs), or we have some, in a way, very passive women, to allow someone to give the initiating role instead of taking it whether the other one gives them permission or not." Shrewdly, she calls attention to the fact that all the group members seem to be looking for approval or support, except, by implication, herself, as she feels free to make caustic, incisive remarks.

The final 15 minutes of the session was taken up by the group's response to Louise's statement. José angrily perceived it as controlling and intended to be like a consultant's interpretation, while Arthur felt it as a judgment passed on the group. Carmen expressed the feeling that it stereotyped the group but also wondered, towards the end, at how much attention it was receiving. Bruce spoke very respectfully of an interpretation offered by the female consultant, in marked contrast to the reception accorded Louise's "interpretation." Thus, it became quite clear that the role initially proposed for Louise by Arthur of the "bad" leader -- the source of the group's anger -- became generally adopted, along with the preservation of the consultants, especially the female consultant, as "good" leaders who are supposed to give interpretations which are, indeed, perceived as helpful. Interestingly, however, it was Louise herself who was primarily influential in bringing this about, as she

declined the group's effort to make her into a heroine, first turning Arthur's compliment into a challenge to him and then turning Bruce's challenge of the male consultant into a provocative challenge to the group as a whole. At the very end of the session she wondered why her expression of "her feeling" should produce "all this shit thrown at me," but it is clear that she declined to be set up in potential opposition to the female consultant -- whose comment she had felt was directed specifically at her earlier, thus bringing her into the group -- and that she felt relatively comfortable in the position she did occupy in the group at the end, receiving its abuse.

III. Regression and the Threat to Identity

The initial group session just described confirms the broad outlines of the consensus theory developed in the first part of the chapter: the group is perceived as an entity in its own right with which members must establish a relationship. The process produces considerable anxiety and gives evidence of primitive defensive mechanisms that are brought to bear upon that anxiety. Let us look at the process more closely to see how the regression begins and what anxiety is produced.

From the start, the group presents its members with a seeming paradox: the group which is in reality nothing more than an aggregate of members, unable to do anything but what its members do, is nevertheless perceived by those same members as an object that exists and acts on its own -- or not (the "silence"). They have to get "into" the group -- establish some relation with it -- though it is nothing more than what each and every one makes of it. This paradox is, in reality, a split that occurs within the ego of each member -- or, perhaps more precisely, between and among ego functions. The ego retains its perceptual abilities, conscious memory, self-image, and the rational thought processes that permit the mind to think about its goals, the dilemmas of adaptation, etc. At the same time, the task of adaptation calls up the image of the group entity, a useful fiction that seeks to

pull together into a synthesis the separate, unknown group members. This regressive-adaptive process, comparable to "regression in the service of the ego" (Kris, 1934), calls upon the recollected early maternal object that loosely linked separate parts together within one boundary in a manner that is common and familiar -- at the very least in our culture -- to cope with such tasks: one need only recollect that the term "member" refers to both a body part as well as a person in a group. As soon, then, as the search for a means of adaptation has produced the "group," the ego is functioning on two disparate levels.

Thus, for example, José at the start spoke about wanting to clarify his goals in the setting but also wanting to become a group member, i.e. distinguishing his personal, differentiated aims but also being able to join in the collective regression, to be included. He hoped to find a "line" that would reconcile these divergent aims. Arthur wondered how the group would become a group and what that would require of him; that is, he expressed a wish to learn about the process of group formation but then forgets he has a role in that formative process when he wonders, only, what the group will require of him. And so on. Each member induces a split within himself by virtue of the effort to adapt to "the group."

Each person's concept of the entity he is attempting to join, however, becomes a public fact that constitutes the corroboration of each other member's concept. That is, a collective fantasy begins to emerge as soon as members give expression to their feelings and perceptions and attempt to integrate them with those of other members. Thus, for example, members quickly came to an agreement that "the silence" embodies their common dread and, hence, they shared a common effort to combat "the silence," an effort symbolized by the role of "the initiator." This common view, at the start, coexists with the view each member has of himself that he is a person remaining silent (or not) confronting his own personal wish to speak (or not). Increasingly, however, as the members articulate their perceptions of the group and of themselves, the collective fantasy becomes the confirmed, common reality they all feel they are up against and they face, thus, such collective agreements as determining if the consultants, for example, are to be seen as inside or outside the group boundary.

It has been suggested (Gibbard, Hartman, & Mann, 1974) that this dual status of the group as reality and fantasy is analogous to Winnicott's (1951) view of the child's "transitional object" which Winnicott himself has suggested continues to be of significance for adults in the realms of art and religion. But there are two important differences to bear

in mind with this otherwise illuminating analogy. First, the group object is articulated collectively so that the individual has less control over the "play" of its changing form. Second, the levels of functioning yoked together by the object are more extreme than with the child, with the effect that the "transitions" are more desperate and drastic, more difficult for the individual to integrate or grasp.

But why is it that they share a common dread: where does the anxiety come from? At the start, I think, members experience a variable amount of anxiety simply because they face the task of adaptation; they know they have relinquished familiar settings and established object ties and now confront a new, unknown set of demands. This must vary considerably from person to person, depending on previous group experiences and current expectations. Thus, for example, Jose spoke first and became more relaxed, though others were extremely agitated.

Once the adaptive process begins to produce the group's collective fantasy, however, a new and more potent source of anxiety comes into play: the liberation of repressed, unconscious impulses and fantasies. As reality testing becomes increasingly bound up with the production of the group's collective fantasy, the individual's repressive barrier is undermined. Impulses slip out into the open, evoked by

other members, and become recognized and sanctioned in the group. The process is what Freud (1921) described to account for emotional contagion and amplification, and seems to be what Slater (1966) means by the "echo" members find for their impulses in each other. Thus, for example, José worried that his impulse to talk up may have harmed the group. That is, his impulse to harm is less under control, he feels, more likely to gain expression and thus he needs to check it out. Arthur becomes afraid that he may have killed the consultants and so welcomes their return with an attempt to establish them as controlling and directing forces in the group.

These liberated impulses, however, need to be understood in relation to objects. That is, one might understand the surfacing of aggression in the group as due to the release of aggressive energy previously bound in the defense of repression. But for Arthur the aggression was directed at the consultants who he felt abandoned the group to "the silence." Subsequently, after the consultants spoke, and when he came to perceive them as necessary to preserve the group against its aggressive impulses, he directed his anger at the object who also combined "leadership potential" and "silence," Louise. Similarly, for José, the group is an entity he may wish to harm precisely because it does evoke in him the regressive fantasy of the shadowy, vague, and

unreliably maternal object towards which he has felt and still continues to feel violent destructive impulses. Certainly, he is the group member who seems to fear and attack Louise most vehemently, which can be understood as his effort to localize -- along with the other group members -- the paranoid anxiety aroused with respect to the group as a whole.

But this account is incomplete without also acknowledging the part in this played by the self-image, or parts of the self-image. José brought up the issue of "breathing space" in the group in response to Bruce's suggestion that Louise be considered the leader; he feared being stifled or squeezed out, using the image of the anonymous jostling of a subway car. The "bad" maternal object, thus, is linked with fear and anger to a self-representation suggestive of extreme vulnerability and exclusion, a desperate, weak self. And this is very much in contrast to the self-image of the heroic initiator supported by other group members.

Louise is the group member for whom the issue of self-definition is most prominent as she deliberately undertook to relinquish her accustomed image of an active, supportive group member. Her hope was to disengage a characteristic role, but as we have seen she ended up helping to establish a role for herself quite close to the one she was assigned by the group in her silence -- a repository of threatening

judgments -- with the difference that in the latter part of the session she was linked with the good and powerful female consultant. Quite probably, she experienced this link with the female consultant in her silence during the opening phase of the group, gathering a sense of strength from it to support her initiative in assuming a silent role. Indeed, her one contribution before her lengthy outburst was to support Arthur's potential defiance of the no smoking rule in a way that paralleled the group perception of the consultants as directive and judging. But it was a link without much confirmatory evidence; moreover, she found herself being judged by the group (as "dead") in a way that disturbed cherished and vital aspects of her own self-image. In fact, it seems as if it was the experience of being stripped of these aspects of her self-image by the group and her need to affirm them that had as much to do with her joining the group as her wish to solidify and demonstrate her bond with the female consultant.

Thus, we can see that Louise's experience in the group is one of coming in with a firmly established sense of her accustomed group role ("I'm usually out in there") but one which, for some reason, she feels dissatisfied with, wanting to change. Under the stress of the group's regressive pressure, she then is stripped not only of the role she voluntarily relinquished but crucial aspects of her self-image she

cannot tolerate giving up, and, thus comes to assert a role for herself in the group that will restore her identity. What she ends up with, however, is a role that yokes together -- albeit in an uninterpreted way that leaves her feeling bewildered -- two types of object relations: her passive, caring link with her good, powerful maternal object in which she is needy and helpful, somewhat like a servant, and her active aggressive link with a male object (seen with José, Bruce, and Arthur) who are seen as docile and perhaps undeserving, whereas she is strong and combative.

We are now in a position to see that the anxiety that is experienced in the group in its regressive process is not merely a response to the liberation of previously repressed impulses, but that these liberated impulses are in fact a part of a general lessening of higher level personality organization. Each member attempts to adapt to the group entity by initiating a split in his level of ego functioning and ends up with a fragmented ego that permits not only the release of repressed impulses but also the appearance of parts of their self-images and object representations in disconnected and dissociated ways. That is the source of anxiety, the chaotic disintegration of accustomed, mature self and object organizations.

This accords with what Kernberg (1980a) recently has suggested. Following Turquet's (1975) analysis of large

group phenomena in terms of threats to personal identity, he suggests that all groups and organizations arouse comparable anxieties: "There is a basic threat to personal identity in group processes that is linked with the activation of primitive object relations, primitive defensive operations, and crude, largely pregenital aggression that threatens the survival of the individual in the group and blocks achievement of the work tasks that the group needs to perform." This is precisely what our analysis of this initial sessions of the group has demonstrated. But it is possible to take our understanding of this process a step further.

In looking at the process of group formation in the previous section, it came to seem that each member attempted to forge out of the material available in the group the group he wished to have present and to ward off as much as possible competing group structures that threatened it. Bruce and Jose, for example, struggled in the early phase of the group to assign competing roles to Louise until Louise herself joined the struggle and, in effect, resolved it. In the terms developed in the Introduction, the role demands on Louise were resolved and reconciled by her role definition. That process is, I think, intimately linked with the struggle over issues of identity; the organization of the object world is linked with the organization of the self, because each group member sustains his self-image in the eyes of the other

group members when "reality" has been reduced to the group's collective fantasy. They need their group in order to be themselves. Louise needs the "good" maternal object and the "bad" male objects -- to grossly oversimplify -- to assert the role that makes her feel alive, combative, as well as supported. Bruce, too, requires the "good" maternal object, but has more interest in splitting off the "bad" paternal object with whom he feels in rivalry. José must identify the "bad" maternal object that threatens his space, but also has an interest in finding the "good" objects that support his heroic role of initiator. And so on. This is, of course, only the sketchiest account, based almost entirely on the limited evidence of the first group session, but it begins to allow us to see how role demands and role definitions begin to be integrated into an over-all group structure.

To explore this relationship between the assertion of identity and the effort to create one's personal group structure -- over against the disintegrative and anxiety-provoking process of joining the group -- is to raise the question of defenses. We have had to note in passing the evidence of splitting as a defense and, of course, the loss of repression as a stable defense in the group. But much more needs to be said about the defensive process called upon by group members to combat the anxiety of group membership. An examination of that, in the next chapter, will I think help us to understand

more fully this whole question of the roles and structures that members attempt to assert in the face of the group's threat to their identities.

CHAPTER TWO:

COUNTER-REGRESSIVE MANEUVERS

I. Organization and Task

Adaptation to the group is the process that initiates regression because the group is perceived, regressively, as an entity the individual must join. But were it possible to join the group without perceiving it as an entity, membership need not require regression. To an extent, that is the situation Bion envisages in the "work group."

Essentially, for Bion, the work group never exists in a pure form. It is a "state of mind" that usually exists alongside the "state of mind" that characterizes the basic assumption group, one that stresses the existence of time as opposed to the kind of timelessness to be found in primary process thinking. Thus, the work group is superimposed upon the basic assumption group, somewhat as secondary process thinking supercedes primary process thinking without abolishing it. Moreover, as Bion points out in his discussion of McDougall's group theory, the work group is organized in the sense that it has a social structure, one that persists through time but also that permits individual members to maintain "a clear view of the aims of the work group." (Bion, 1961, p. 158). One might add what Bion seems to imply in this, that thus the individual is able to maintain a sense of his particular relation to the group task which is embodied in his work role.

In the terms used in Chapter One, the work group is that state of mind in which members are able to sustain contact with individual reality: ego functions of self perception, logic, and goal directed behavior are not only maintained but clearly dominant. If there is a split among ego functions, one part addressing the group entity, the split is minimized with the regressive-adaptive function kept clearly subordinate. The adaptive task kept uppermost in the mind of members is the group task itself, which is what requires differentiation among members, assessment of individual performances, organization, and some continuing sense of a link with the reality outside the group, the reality that is to be ultimately influenced by the task performance of the group.

To maintain the work group, then, is to maintain control over the regressive processes that bind members together in basic assumptions. And that is possible so long as the work task is clear, the differentiated work roles maintained, and the outside world (at the end of the group's time) kept in view. Without these structures, members are invariably pulled into the process of adaptation to the group entity, i.e. regression.

Jaques (1955) has developed the comparable idea that institutions provide organization as a kind of compromise. That is, just as the "work group" and the "basic assumption

group" co-exist in the minds of group members, Jaques argues that organization embodies stable means for institutions to address their tasks on the one hand while also providing means for members of the institution to defend themselves against the anxieties of membership in the institution on the other. Good institutions provide both, but as Menzies (1975) pointed out, building on Jaques' work, the defensive requirements of organization can often lead to an undermining of effective functioning which has, in turn, the effect of heightening anxiety because of the objective dilemmas produced for members through their inefficient task performance.

Organization can thus be said to provide a defensive function against anxiety and regression in two senses: by maintaining an emphasis on task performance that relates the institution to the outside world, and by providing for the inescapable defensive needs of its members as much as possible in ways that do not subvert its task performance. This second function, in a sense, is to provide a framework within which defensive operations, such as projective identification, can take place and may even be encouraged. The first ensures that the "reality" created in the group by virtue of its collective basic assumptions does not obscure the pre- and post-group realities that link it through task performance to the outside world.

II. Projective Identification

If the structure of the work group -- i.e. the "state of mind" that maintains the group's perspective on the work task -- acts as a guard against the group's becoming dominated by "basic assumptions," it is equally true that for Bion the "basic assumptions," in turn, guard the group against psychotic anxiety. Instead of being inundated by primitive fantasies of part object relations aroused by the group entity, members elaborate fantasies about a leader who embodies the threat that is felt in a more concrete form (the basic assumption of fight/flight), or who appears to offer protection and comfort (dependency), or hope of an ultimate solution (pairing). These collective fantasies obscure the most primitive fantasies of individual members regarding the group because the focus on the leader serves in part to obscure the group itself.

As we have seen, Bion's view of the group leader is part of his disagreement with Freud's group theory. For him, the group leader is not only not the dominant figure group members take him to be and Freud's theory asserts -- a mastermind "hypnotist" who sways the group's unconscious impulses -- "but is rather an individual whose personality renders him peculiarly susceptible to the obliteration of individuality by the basic-assumption group's leadership requirements." Thus, he is no different from any other group member -- except

perhaps insofar as he is more vulnerable to being used by the group -- as much involved as the other members of the group in elaborating the defensive fantasy that incarnates the figure of the leader in one of the members.

To put it another way: the leader emerges because the role demands of the group members coincide sufficiently with his role definition to lend validity to the collective fantasy that the leader exists. Moreover, as Bion makes clear in his discussion, leadership is as unstable and shifting as the basic assumptions that underlie it at any given moment, so that it would be a misunderstanding to think of leadership as attached to any particular person in the group. Indeed, as basic assumptions shift so must the qualities that suit a group member to assume a leadership role, and so, invariably, will leadership be passed around. Thus, for Bion, leadership becomes a way of saying that different members of the group at different times and with respect to different defensive needs take the lead in accepting particular roles on behalf of the group and in accordance with their own susceptibility to those roles.

This becomes clearer when we examine the mechanism that, according to Bion, underlies this process: projective identification. This process was first described by Melanie Klein (1946), whose account of it Bion appears to accept in Experiences in Groups, as the infant's earliest and most primitive

defensive effort. The object is split so that the "good" can be preserved from the enviously destructive "bad"; the bad object then becomes the repository of "bad parts of the self" (impulses to harm, rage) through projection which is then experienced through identification as a persecutor, while the "good parts" (loving impulses, satisfactions) are projected onto the "good" object and experienced as comforting and protective. Thus, the infant's earliest experience becomes organized and modified: the "good" breast is protected from destructive impulses, making it available for internalization and the sense of security that derives from possession of the "good" inner object, and the "bad" breast helps to decontaminate the violence of the infant's primitive rage so that it can be experienced in more tolerable forms.

According to Klein, the projection diminishes the infant's anxiety and the identification guarantees that the strengths associated with the impulses will not be lost to the infant, but can be introjected from, as it were, their places of safe-keeping.

It is easy to see how these processes might function in a group, to create leadership figures: the dependency leader is the repository of the group's "good" parts in order to keep them safe, uncontaminated, and available for reintrojection while the fight/flight leader serves to contain the projected "bad" parts of members that are felt to be too

dangerous inside members but which in this outside form can be defended against by fighting or fleeing. And by being maintained within the boundary of the group these split off parts are not lost but continue to be felt as available.

This account of projective identification, though, needs to be re-examined in the light of a developmental perspective that sees object relations evolving alongside of the self and that takes into consideration the maturation of ego functions. Moreover, we need to take into account the view developed in Chapter One that the profound anxiety experienced by group members which is defended against by projective identification springs not so much from primitive fantasies of part objects, existing from birth, but from the regressive process itself in which the group member's identity is threatened along with the de-differentiation of psychic structures, a process that includes in it the liberation of previously repressed impulses and fantasies.

We might begin by raising the question of what projection means when the projecting infant lacks a firm boundary round its own self, marking inside and outside -- when, in Mahler's (1968) phrase, the infant and mother are experienced together as a symbiotic unit. Anna Freud has argued that projection can function as a defense only when the ego is differentiated from external reality, disagreeing with Klein and her followers who see projection and introjection as the

mechanisms that establish the differentiated self. But even Anna Freud remarks that the subject is obscure and refers to Freud's discussion of projection in Totem and Taboo (1913) in which he links it, as a primitive mechanism, to the functioning of sense perceptions that attribute to external objects inner sensations the infant has no means of distinguishing directly.

Bion (1962) has argued that projective identification is the prototypical object relation and defense, the means the infant has of attempting to rid itself of unwelcome stimuli and, reciprocally, acquiring the beginning elements of thought. He thus emphasizes the oral quality of projection, spitting out, as does Fenichel (1945), a procedure that does not require of the infant a sense of a differentiated self so much as a simple if global physiological means of attempting to cope with disagreeable sensations through evacuation. Such a process is implied in Freud's (1915) discussion of the "purified pleasure-ego" that attempts to maintain itself by creating a boundary beyond which unpleasurable experiences are projected. Thus, in the earliest developmental stages, it may be possible that the infant uses projection even though it does not experience itself as differentiated clearly from outside. In attempting to rid himself of disagreeable or anxiety producing sensations he may project them out of or away from what he vaguely distinguishes as a core into an

obscure and inconsistently differentiated outside that may well be at first, as Bion argues, the intermittantly appearing breast but which then becomes a more elaborated, clearly differentiated, and stable realm of external objects as projection becomes more familiar and the perceptual and cognitive functions mature.

This essentially supports Klein's view of projective identification as a primitive defense mechanism, but it leaves serious questions about her corresponding view of the infant's defensive splitting of the object: how can an object be split that has not been experienced as whole? A more likely view of the "split" object is provided by Jacobson (1964) who sees the aggressive and libidinal drives as becoming increasingly differentiated, organizing principles for the developing infant as he learns to distinguish between pleasurable and unpleasurable experiences and the objects associated with them. Thus, rather than splitting the object, the infant develops different constellations of "good" and "bad" objects under the sway of increasingly differentiated drives, constellations of object representations that, once established, help him to organize and categorize his experiences and in that way acquire defensive capabilities comparable to those postulated by Klein from birth.

The key point of this revised view of projection and projective identification is that it can be viewed as

occurring along a continuum from the infant's earliest relation to the breast and later, more differentiated object relations. Malin and Grotstein (1966), indeed, have argued that it is projection that keeps identification processes healthy because it maintains boundaries around the self. "A projection, of itself, seems meaningless unless the individual can retain some contact with what is projected. That contact is a type of internalization, or, loosely, an identification." For them, thus, all projection is projective identification -- but not the reverse, and that, in fact, is how they distinguish the healthy uses of identification, those that interact with projection to bring about a modification and integration of object images, from pathological identification processes in which incorporation or merger with the object occurs.

Jaffe (1968) has made an analogous point, arguing that projection is a process that can be located at some point on a continuum with respect to the preservation of the object. At one end of the continuum the object is identified with and preserved, while, at the other, the effort is made to annihilate the object, an effort that he associates with increased pathology and poor prognosis for therapeutic treatment.

The essential point is that projective identification here is being seen as a developmental achievement, one that the developing infant learns to utilize defensively as he

begins to acquire a sense of boundaries around the self and organize his aggressive and libidinal impulses with respect to the objects that first become distinguished in the symbiotic unit as having a location more or less reliably "outside." Malin and Grotstein's formulation suggest that the defense becomes less useful and, indeed, anti-developmental precisely when the boundaries that make projection possible are blurred. Jaffe's view suggests that the impulse to annihilate the object is also developmentally earlier -- a product of narcissistic rage that eventually becomes tempered by a contrasting impulse to preserve the object. It is likely, indeed, that both the threat of merger with the object and the threat of its annihilation are more potent and present for the infant who has not begun to acquire a secure sense of object constancy arising out of the boundaries that distinguish self and other.

This view of projective identification is of a defense with some considerable variability with respect to the firmness and constancy of the object that is projected into as well as the nature of the projected contents. That is, the infant may well be able to project out his acute discomfort into the undefined space that constitutes his undifferentiated world and receive back from the maternal object a sense of containment that modifies his experience, and we may look upon that as a prototypical form of projective identification. Somewhat later, developmentally, he may begin to organize

his world in terms of the "good" and "bad" objects that are available to him as receptacles for his impulses. Beyond that we may see situations where relatively complex attributions are being made to objects that bear clear signs of inner objects as well as affects, the kinds of transference phenomenon that Malin and Grotstein see as healthy forms of projective identification in the therapeutic setting. This view of the uses of projective identification along a continuum corresponding to developmental stages in self/object differentiation is in accord, then, with Shapiro's (1978) statement in his recent review of the literature on the borderline patient: "Projective identification is a defense used along a spectrum of psychopathology from normal to psychotic."

There is an important aspect of projective identification that has produced much confusion and remains to be clarified: The part played by the repository or container of the projections. The effectiveness of the defense clearly depends to some extent on the cooperation (not necessarily consciously intended, of course) of the recipient of the projections. If he does not adjust his behavior somewhat in accordance with the projection, the projection onto him will not be as convincing as otherwise and, therefore, the defensive distancing of the projected material will not be stable; more important, it will then not continue to be available for subsequent

identification. But questioning about how this acceptance or confirmation of the projection may occur has often produced much skepticism of what sometimes has been presented as a quasi-mystical process. Commenting on this, Kernberg (1975) has written: "It is as if the patient were pushing the aggressive part of his self onto the therapist and as if the counter-transference represented the emergence of this part of the patient from within the therapist." (p. 80) But this appearance is deceptive. In reality, according to Kernberg, a counter-transferential process is evoked that it is crucial the therapist come to understand and inhibit in himself in order to break the vicious repetitive cycle of the patient's experience of others as hostile or dangerous.

Thus for Kernberg, following Racker (1957), projective identification "works" by invoking a special form of counter-transference, "complementary identification," in which projected parts of the patient activate reciprocal parts of the therapist that cause him to assume a complementary role, often modelled on the patient's archaic objects. Grinberg (1962, 1973) has attempted to distinguish between counter-transferential reactions of the analyst and what he terms "projective counter-identification" in order to account for those examples of projective identification in which "the emotional responses may be quite independent of the analyst's own emotions and appear mainly as a reaction to the analysand's

projections upon him." This can arise, he argues, because of the analyst's too intense and prolonged emphatic stance vis a vis the patient.

But the phenomenon that concerns us here is the use of projective identification in group settings and this, quite clearly, depends upon the kind of mechanisms generally referred to as counter-transference. That is, conflicts generated in the subject lead to defensive projections which in turn activate or intensify complementary conflicts in others. The process has been commented upon by a number of observers of family process. Brody (1965), for example, does not use the term projective identification, referring to a process of projection and mutual externalization to reify identities in pathological families; but he is clearly referring to a process in which projective identification leads to a relatively stable assignment of family roles, usually at the price of denying aspects of the persons involved in the process that do not fit them as recipients of the agreed-upon projections. Shapiro and Zinner (1976) and Shapiro, Zinner, Shapiro, and Berkowitz (1975) comment on an almost identical process in the families of adolescents and borderline patients and explicitly refer to projective identification as the key mechanism in the process of "delineation," in which the recipient of the projections is induced to accept them as part of his identity, the price he pays for family membership.

In groups there is always a variety of persons able to respond to the projections of others in varying complementary ways. And as the work with families referred to previously suggests, there are probably in all group members predispositions to use projective identification and to act as the recipient of projective identifications that are derived from their family experience.

We saw that, in Chapter One, in the case of Louise who accepted the group's attribution to her of the rejecting mother, after having come in initially with the hope of finding a new role for herself. To look at that process again, only now specifically from the point of view of the group's defensive operation, we can see that the group is contending with powerful feelings of rage at its "abandonment" by the consultants, a rage that becomes progressively greater as the regressive-adaptive process both throws the group increasingly into a helpless infantile position and deprives members of their more accustomed defenses. One sign of that rage was Arthur's fantsy of having killed off the consultants -- but the difficulty in that is the group's need to preserve the consultants as protective "good" objects; so it resorts to splitting.

Louise was a suitable, potential object of rage from the start because her silence made her appear comparable to the withholding consultants. But she became a container for

those feelings in the group when she more actively identified with the female consultant and accepted a provocative role on her behalf, subtly blaming the group for its dependent ("passive" and "docile") behavior. The group could then locate much of its angry feeling in her, experiencing it as a form of persecution, because she in fact was willing to take on the task of blaming. But there was a significant discrepancy between the feeling she was willing to express and the feelings that were then loaded into her by the group, a discrepancy that she expressed at the end of the group in wondering why it was that she merely expressed her feelings and ended up getting "all this shit." In Bion's terms she became the group's fight leader by virtue of the projections and identifications that allowed the group to attribute much of its anger to her and blame her as it felt she blamed them.

This is an incomplete account of the interaction, however, because it leaves out the specific role of José who was also a recipient of projective identification. As the one who became most incensed at Louise's "behavior," he also was assigned a particular role in carrying the anger of the group, that of the tempestuous, irrational child who "overreacts" and then clamps down on his rage. José, of course, had his own family background to account for his susceptibility to that role, a background manifest to some extent in his interaction with Louise in the group and the group's early

effort to make her into a protective female leader. His resentment went on to make him, in effect, the fight leader in expressing the group's resentment at Louise's blame, carrying those feelings on behalf of the group. That he was indeed the repository of the group's resentment became unmistakably clear during the fifth session when, in José's absence, Louise first mistakenly thought someone was "seething" and then Arthur spoke of his sense that Jose often "seethed" in the group but now the group seemed dispirited. In José's absence, the group missed the person who willingly contained the resentment of all its members, and it sought for other means to handle those feelings.

Thus, the rage of the group at its abandonment was contained in the two fight leaders who alternately blamed and resented each other in a kind of ritual fashioned out of projective identification that permitted the rest of the group, in effect, to observe its feelings at a distance. Clearly, this arrangement worked defensively for the members who were thus able to dispose of their resentment and blame. It also worked for Louise and José -- but not symmetrically. For Louise, it reinforced her sense that she had a special relationship with the female consultant who would protect her and, perhaps more important, give to her the attention and approval she longed for. And, indeed, through projective identification she may well have succeeded in imagining that she got what

she wanted: projecting her own caring and nurturant impulses into the female consultant, she was able to identify with those qualities and retrieve them by imagining that the female consultant's remarks, though impartial, contained a specific message for her. Thus, it is possible to see that she got back what she wanted because she was able to give it -- out of the need, in part, to split it off from the angry, blameful feelings directed at the male members of the group.

For José, however, the experience appears to have been less satisfactory. He was accustomed to those feelings of resentment in himself but typically resorted to denial and avoidance as defenses against them, defenses that did not work effectively in the group. And because they were so strong he was vulnerable to being used again and again by the group as a repository for their resentments, blown about by feelings he was barely able to contain.

Enough has been said at this point, I think, to provide a complete account of how projective identification functions as a defense in a group setting and pull together the various parts of this discussion into a summary statement. As we saw in Chapter One, the group undergoes a regressive adaptation by virtue of members' efforts to come to terms with the entity that appears to confront them with the need to join it. That process fragments the identity members brought with

them into the group and undermines the differentiation of psychic structures, most particularly by weakening repression with the consequence that impulses and fantasies are exposed. The anxiety members thus experience -- besieged by impulses that no longer accord with their self-images and that are inadequately contained by their psychic structures -- requires the elaboration of new defensive structures.

I think we can see now that the regressive process takes the group back to a lower, less integrated but relatively stable level of functioning through the operation of projective identification. That occurs in essentially three inter-related ways. First, those members who utilize projective identification have found a means of relieving their anxiety by splitting off and distancing themselves from the affects and impulses that threaten them. Second, those who function as the recipients of projective identification have often restored to themselves through that process a familiar way of being used that, in turn, activates other related defenses they have succeeded in developing with respect to that role. Thus, Louise found herself bewildered in the group by what was happening to her, but that bewilderment was not ununfamiliar to her in her family setting and, indeed, had compensating features that made her feel relatively comfortable with it. That was not so with José, yet it was also true that his experience in the group was so common that he had learned,

adaptively, to minimize his participation in groups as much as possible.

The third way this lower level of functioning becomes stabilized is by the integration of the projections and their recipients, an integration which heals the split among ego functions that was initiated by the regressive-adaptive process in the first place. That is, as we saw, members are confronted by a dual perception of themselves as individuals facing an adaptive task and as members who belong or not to the group entity -- a split that persists in members so long as they are able to maintain any degree of accuracy or objectivity in their perceptions of themselves or the persons in the group. And to the extent to which members struggle with the problem of joining and are able to maintain a sense of separateness, that split persists. But when an "agreement" has been developed in the group that the projection has been accepted -- that is, when projective identification begins to work -- the split among ego functions is abolished; the person becomes the projection and there is one reality, the consensus that has been produced in the group. (Jaffe (1968) has provided an illuminating discussion of this issue, albeit not in a group setting, as it pertains to splits in the ego both with respect to identification with the object by projection and projection in the sense of the annihilating tendency. In his terms, what has happened in the group when the

projections are accepted is the extension or externalization of members' egos rather than splitting.)

When these three defensive aspects of projective identification have come together, the regressive process is stemmed. The threat of disintegration and fragmentation of identity is alleviated. A new reality has snapped into place -- but a restrictive one, defined and limited by the role each group member is permitted to serve on behalf of the others' defensive needs.

III. Denial

As Jaques (1955) pointed out, projective identification is the mechanism largely employed for defensive purposes in organizations, alongside their continuing emphasis on task performance and, through that, external reality. But the group we have been examining provides us with the opportunity to examine what happens when those defenses prove inadequate and yet more primitive means are invoked. That occurs because the task of the group is hard to grasp and certainly does not present itself in rules for behavior or in an articulated set of differentiated roles. Moreover, projective identification is threatened as a successful defense by the fact that the consultants do not agree to collude in accepting or reinforcing the group's projections. As we have seen, there has been an effort to preserve the consultants as good objects; but the consistent use of interpretations aimed at uncovering the anxiety and hostility in the group makes it difficult for the group to maintain them in the roles of basic assumption dependency leaders.

Freud (1924a, 1924b) suggested that the most primitive defense of all, the defense characterizing the psychoses that corresponds to the role or repression in the neuroses, is denial: a portion of reality that would threaten to arouse instinctual pressure or conflict is blotted out. This is primitive because it involves the displacement of attention

and manipulation of perception, capabilities developed by the infant before the development of psychic structures that makes repression possible. It is also damaging because it directly interferes with the ego's ability to test reality. Anna Freud's (1936) discussion of denial reiterated these points but also called attention to the normal utilization of denial in childhood play; thus, in her view, denial becomes pathogenic only when it persists beyond the point when other defenses become available developmentally and when the ego has lost the capability of moving back and forth, so to speak, from denial to reality testing, when play rigidifies into a more or less permanent restriction of the ego.

Recently, Kernberg (1976) has stressed the splitting of the ego as a primitive defense, a defense most conspicuous in borderline personality organization. In his view, the developing ego organizes itself around constellations of self and object images with positive and negative valences and, thus, falls back upon its split organization defensively in order to protect the integration of positive introjections. "What originally was a lack of integrative capacity is gradually, in the presence of overwhelming anxiety, used defensively by the emerging ego and maintains introjections with different valences dissociated or split from each other." (1976, p. 36) Kernberg adds that initially the negative

introjections are "ejected," forming the first primitive basis for the differentiation of "me" and "not me," and that projection continues to play an important role in the ego's ability to rid itself of negative introjections and thus maintain its defensive split.

This implies that the process of projective identification is important developmentally in the ego's ability both to maintain a split as well as to hold onto the split or dissociated elements in order to prevent a further degree of fragmentation as well as for subsequent integrations. Or, to look at it from another perspective, the efficacy of projective identification depends upon the ego's ability to split itself and to safeguard that split through projections into objects that continue to be available.

This involves a disavowal of the projected material but a continuing perception of it. Denial comes into play when the projected material is no longer perceived and, hence, unavailable for reintrojection or identification. Thus, we may say that it occurs at the pathological end of the spectrum along which projective identification can occur, at the point where projection is untempered by any need or wish to hold onto the projected material or, more likely, any ability in the ego to modify its desperate defensive urge to dispose of it once and for all.

Denial, then, is a defense first acquired by the child who ignores elements of reality that frighten or threaten to arouse frightening impulses, but which also comes into play later on in the service of obliterating intrapsychic material that is projected out into external reality. In both cases, though, it requires the utilization of "screens" for its effective operation, that is the presence of relatively neutral substitute perceptions (or memories) to take the place of the denied reality. Screen memories, for example, help to obscure earlier, frightening memories connected with instinctual urges in children before repression has been established as a secure defense (Fenichel, 1945). Later and more pathological uses of denial can lead to character disturbances requiring a restless and never satisfied "sceen hunger." (Greenson, 1958)

Splitting is an essential aspect of this process in two ways. First, of course, is the splitting that isolates and detaches the unwelcome aspects of the self that then become available for disposal. Second is the split it is necessary for the ego to maintain in order to make denial work. On the one hand, there is the observing ego that is convinced, as it were, by the defense, experiencing the diminution of anxiety the defensive maneuver is designed to accomplish. On the other there is that portion of the ego that must alertly and vigilantly provide the "screens" that occupy

the perceptual field, and guard against the openings or inadequacies of those screens that might permit the reappearances of the defended against material. (It may well be that it is this restlessly searching quest of the ego to find ever-more satisfactory diversions and preoccupations that lends a manic quality to denial.) Or the ego is involved in forging compromises between its perception and memory of reality and its wish to obliterate aspects of reality, compromises that may well be arrived at as relatively stable alternatives that will not require as much vigilance to maintain. Such memories or perceptions can then become established as distorted versions of reality.

In the examples that follow, we will examine how the group attempts to resort to screen versions of reality as its efforts to utilize projective identification break down under the pressure of the consultants' interpretations. In following these more desperate defensive efforts what we will see, in effect, is the progressively greater splitting of members' egos, first in the efforts at denial that cut members off increasingly from their own experience and then in a kind of fragmentation that attempts to abolish the reality of group membership altogether.

The third session of the group began to make clear that the members were losing the sense they could rely upon the consultants for protection. Fantasies of the group as the consultants' still-born, "aborted" offspring emerged and,

then, anxieties that members were being "ripped off," robbed of their words by the consultants who took notes and tape recorded the sessions, making the members into "data." Arthur remarked that there "would be at least two people who would get something out of" the group -- the consultants -- and Bruce uttered a phrase to characterize the group as a whole: "Six people sure to lose something."

The session had begun with 15 minutes of silence, except for one interpretation by each of the consultants calling attention to the group's remarkable seating arrangement: Bruce and Arthur were sitting on either side of the male consultant with their feet extended so as to cut him off from the rest of the group and the female consultant who sat opposite; on her right was an empty chair left for Jose who arrived about five minutes late. What emerged was a sense in the group of a "take-over plot" to neutralize the "power" felt to reside in the female consultant. Blocking the male consultant so as to split him off was meant to preserve him in the group as well as deprive the female consultant of his assistance; pairing the female consultant with angry Jose was meant to keep her on the defensive. The "plot" represented an effort on the part of the group to locate its anxieties about being swallowed up by the group entity in the female consultant and then contain it -- and hence it meant giving up an effort to preserve the female consultant

as the group protector. The prolonged silence and the ambiguous physical gestures, however, can be understood as expressions of the group's conflicted ambivalence: setting itself up in readiness, as it were, to fight her but sitting in wait to see if it might not be unnecessary after all. Towards the end of the group, the members then began to express their fantasies of being used by the consultants -- but following the consultants' lead in speculating on the group's anxiety -- and they also expressed obliquely their admiration for the consultants who wouldn't let them "get away with anything." Thus, they re-established their dependency relationship.

But the anxieties had to return again because the consultants' role required them to expose the group's anxiety, with the effect that they became frightening objects for the group.

The fourth session began to make clear how the group used pairing in the service of denial. It began with José's remarking on how he had not wanted to come that evening and had thought all week about the pair of Bruce and Arthur as well as the pair of Louise and another member -- how "casual" that felt to him which he then linked with having a second language. (In the previous session he had expressed the wish to be in a Spanish language group, instead of this one, as he would then be more comfortable, Spanish being his native language.) He went on to ask about the pairs, which the group obligingly took up in an active fashion. Arthur wondered if

José felt that he received support from Bruce, support José felt he lacked, and Louise brought out that she and the other member had known each other before and felt paired but also that she had felt José and Carmen were too: "I thought everyone was paired off, whether they wanted to or not." In the discussion that ensued it became quite clear that all of the pairings had extremely problematic aspects: Louise spoke of the tension she felt under with respect to her acquaintance, José of his distance from Carmen, Arthur of not being supported by Bruce -- but they spoke in an active, lively manner that made it clear that the perceived pairs and the pairing issue provided considerable relief for the members and, despite shortcomings, made it easier to be present. That is, it was as if each member spoke from the perspective of being a member of a pair, complaining and comparing his experience with that of members of other pairs. The group of individual members -- "six people sure to lose something" -- was blotted out.

It is important to distinguish this pairing phenomenon in the group from Bion's basic assumption of pairing as well as other more developmentally advanced forms of dyadic relationships. In the basic assumption of pairing, of course, one pair is set up in the group to be the repository of the group's genital strivings that might otherwise lead to frustration and rivalry. In this case not only was the entire

group organized into pairs but the discussion lacked the quality of messianic, vague hopefulness that characterizes the defensive wish of how those sexual feelings are to be expressed. Nor are these pairs to be thought of as representing higher level strivings. For one thing, the two most "successful" pairs were constituted of the same sex; for another, they were rife with scarcely concealed disappointments and inadequacies. Kernberg (1980b, 1980c) has recently suggested that the pair and the group represent antithetical tendencies in relationships; that is, one cannot truly be a member of a pair and a group simultaneously, so contradictory are the demands placed upon the individual in each setting. In this case, however, the pairings in the group clearly lacked the level of commitment necessary to make them into real alternatives to group membership. Nevertheless, the paired up members may well have felt in their attraction to the pairing relationship some sense of its potential for blocking out or annihilating constraints and anxieties of their group membership.

The key to the pairing behavior, I think, lies in its having been a means for members to imitate the consultant pair, the pair they felt had the power and perhaps the will to rip them off and who seemed to stand aloof from the group and its pressures. In this respect this imitation, I think, is even more primitive than "identification with the aggressor" (A. Freud, 1936), a defense that can be viewed as a specific

form of projective identification; the paired up members were virtually without affect in their casual discussions, certainly at this point without the hostility that might imply an identification with perceived aggression, however much members may have feared hostile intentions from the consultants. The imitation of the consultant pairs, rather, was a form of mirroring that permitted members to link up with what they perceived as the omnipotent consultants without having to engage in any deeper identification process that would force them to confront their ambivalent feelings towards the consultants and, so, determine if they were to be viewed as objects of fight or dependency.

Greenacre (1972) has written about mirroring as an automatic reflex response of the child to the mother that in normal development leads to the stabilization of the body-self image but which can be regressively activated in crowds. Under the pressure of the crowd, she argues, individuals mirror each other and so lessen the sense of individual boundaries and weaken the sense of individual identity. In this situation, somewhat comparably, I think, members resorted to the mirroring reflex response in part because it promised to restore with borrowed boundaries as it were their weakened identities but also because that imitative reality of their paired relationships served, for a time, to obliterate any interactive relationship with the consultants. Their paired

identities served as a screen for their conflicted and fearful apprehensions of the consultants, permitting them to blot out the ambivalent and vulnerable position they occupied as group members. Instead of being in a group with a pair of consultants, they could now believe that a collection of pairs existed, like the consultants. The group thus disappeared from view.

The focus on pairs continued powerfully on into the fifth session in which José was absent, as he had announced he would be the previous week. The group began with Arthur's stating that "the pairs showed up," referring to the absence of José and Carmen -- though Carmen arrived shortly. In the process of being interrogated by the group on her feelings of not being paired with José, which she said she accepted, she pointed out nevertheless that she had seriously thought about not coming that evening but decided that, if she didn't, it would have given rise to fantasies about her relationship with José. Throughout the discussion, again, the group was relaxed and detached, somewhat as if it were conducting a review of an occurrence elsewhere, though clearly it had an interest in the subject matter it had chosen, namely the restoration of the third pair in order to complete the group as a triad of pairs.

Gradually, however, it became apparent that there was considerable anger felt in the group towards José (which

Carmen had at first borne the brunt of) because of his absence. That is, the group members envied his escape from the group -- an escape far more successful and thorough than theirs had been into pairs, under the watchful gaze of the consultants who intruded with their interpretations. Gradually, the resentment at José widened to include the consultants and then the pairs themselves: Bruce and Arthur quarrelled about who had gotten the other into the group. The group ended on a note of questioning about why members had come, then hatred of their experience and fear that the structure provided by the consultants was perhaps too shaky to withstand their rage.

For two sessions, then, the pairing of the group members had provided a screen reality -- one substantiated by their overt behavior to each other in a way that was not without its compensating features -- but a screen, nevertheless, permitting them to obliterate the panic and rage they felt about being group members, stripped of their accustomed identities, deprived of familiar defenses, and exposed to regressive impulses and fantasies. And, when it could function no more, what emerged in the group was a climate of fear and hostility, a generalized effort to dispose of powerful aggressive impulses but without any agreement as to how that might be done. The group members hurled accusations at each other and feared for the ability of any structure to contain their explosive rage.

The two sessions that followed were characterized essentially by various efforts by the group to re-establish the consultants as dependency leaders: dreams were presented that required interpretations, personal problems that seemingly demanded intervention. So much anxiety was raised by the sense of abandonment and loss of structure in the group -- anxiety that the fragmentation of the group and the hurling of accusations poorly defended against -- that the group redoubled its efforts at elaborating a basic assumption that would preserve at least one consultant as a repository for the group members' sense of strength and nurturance.

The eighth session brought this effort to a head and provided a dramatic example of prolonged inner flight, the most extreme case of denial in which the group reality itself is abolished in the minds of members. The session began with Bruce's observation that the group no longer felt to him like a safe place, and he went on to say that his tendency was to withdraw, go into hiding, so that people were forced to ask him again and again, "Where are you?" His statement and the discussion it provoked were part of the group effort continuing from the previous sessions to evoke help or concern from the consultants, but it also expressed the general sense in the group that the situation was fraught with danger and that withdrawal seemed the only recourse.

The flight was precipitated by the male consultant's observation that the female consultant in particular seemed to be the object of the group's concern: they seemed preoccupied by thoughts of her yet kept the two seats on either side of her vacant for latecomers to occupy. Several minutes of what seemed like stunned silence followed, broken by a comment by the female consultant to the effect that it was as if a "black hole" had developed in the group into which comments disappeared and she speculated if that might be related to black thoughts in the group about her. That comment too was followed by silence, but gradually then it seemed as if members returned from the places to which they had fled. One member -- as if just arriving -- wondered if there would be adequate heat tonight. Carmen reported that she had been miles away, driven by the male consultant's interpretation; but the female consultant's comment had brought her back. She wondered that if she was so powerful, did that mean the male consultant was nurturant -- to which Louise objected, noting that the female consultant had also provided warmth in the form of an electrical heater this evening. Bruce and Arthur joined in what became a rather vague discussion of nurturance and strength in the two consultants.

It is, of course, impossible to know with certainty what the dread thought was that sent the group into flight,

but it seems plausible that the male consultant's interpretation confronted the group members decisively with their wish for the all "good" mother who combined nurturance and strength and their fear that they were in the presence of the "bad" withholding mother who would also not protect them. Thus they fled, to preserve the wish and escape the fear verbalized by the male consultant -- and then returned, in response to the female consultant's comment (less its content, I expect, than the fact that it manifested her presence) in order to reconstruct the wish around the evidence of her strength and goodness: her power to retrieve them from their flight and her provision of the electric heater.

Referring to this defensive maneuver as flight may suggest that it is an example of Bion's basic assumption of fight/flight, a group organized around a leader who either conducts it in flight or embodies that which is fled from. And, indeed, it may be that Bion would include this phenomenon among group flight behaviors, with the male consultant in the role of the flight leader. But what is striking is the fragmentation and disconnectedness in the group; each member fled to a private reality that so preoccupied him that it was as if he was no longer present in the group. The group reality -- which confronted members with their untenable wish and potent fear -- was abolished. Abolished along with that

too seems to have been any thought about the male consultant and, correspondingly, any effort to sustain him as a flight-leader through projective identification. Indeed, it seems that rather than put the embodiment of their fear in orbit around the group, containing and relocating it outside of the members, the group itself fragmented and went into individual orbits around the "black hole" that represented where it once had been.

This fragmentation of the group to blot out the anxiety of members' presence in the group -- more precisely, anxiety about connecting the wish for the "good" mother with fear of the "bad" -- is suggestive of psychotic-like behavior. Searles (1961), for example, has written about the ego-fragmentation of schizophrenics that seems to have as its purpose the defense against powerful affects that would result from the integration of "good" and "bad" objects. The analogy is exact as the mechanism is the same: in order to preserve the wish for the "good" mother from the threat represented in the male consultant's interpretation that the group was in fact ambivalent -- and thus in order to preserve the preambivalent object -- the group broke up into disconnected pieces which were incapable of any act of integration or synthesis.

But, of course, group reality and individual reality are not the same and neither are their psychotic processes. For

group members, the defense does have psychotic proportions because the reality of group membership along with the possibility of relatedness to any task linking the group to external reality is annihilated. The group is immobilized and each member within the group. At the same time, however, each fragment of the group is a person who has restored to him through the screen of personal reminiscences and/or fantasies that occupy his attention a segment of his individual experience and reality with whatever reassuring coherence that may provide. In a sense, one might say that the group goes into a psychotic episode, immobilizing itself to preserve its preambivalent "good" object, but individual members become encapsulated in their private realities and preserved from fragmentation within their own psychic systems.

This corresponds to the fact that what is being defended against is the anxiety of group membership -- and the reality that insofar as members are caught up in the regressive entity that has aroused and released powerful impulses they require defenses in the group. But, at the same time, they can escape through memory or reverie back to a personal reality -- to some extent -- a reality that promises the restoration of familiar realities outside the group setting. It is a kind of benign hallucination, comparable to the hallucination of the breast that screens out the terror and rage of its absence. At the same time, it is composed of complete experiences

of whole objects contained in an adult perspective -- day-dreams that comfort, lacking only in the capacity to be integrated to any extent at all in the present reality of group membership.

Thus, we may characterize the defensive maneuvers of group members as occurring on three broad levels. The "work group" keeps the regressive entity at bay by making prominent all those aspects of group reality that are continuous with external reality: time, task, and structure. Projective identification, at the next level, heals the split within the egos of members and reconciles the tensions of basic assumption and work group life by forging a new set of agreements and identities; the anxiety of membership is defended against, adaptation to the group entity has occurred, but at the price of a constriction in members' functioning. They must be their roles. At the lowest level, the level where anxiety that has not been successfully contained by projective identification causes the invocation of denial, members once again introduce a split within their egos in order to be able to split themselves off from the dangerous group. They act "as if" a reality obtained in the group that freed them from their anxiety, but at the cost of an emotional detachment. In its most extreme form of fragmentation and inner flight, the split becomes total as the effort is made to annihilate the reality of group membership, replacing it with private but impotent recollections and fantasies.

In reality these levels are never so purely differentiated. Defenses overlap and interact. But the usefulness in characterizing them in this manner is that these levels broadly distinguish degrees of dysfunctional behavior, defenses that increasingly deprive group members of the range of their individual competencies in groups and their capacity to interact with each other fully and in relation to objective goals. To put it another way, they characterize the extent of the regressive process and, thus, the increasingly desperate and totally involving efforts that have to be made for defensive purposes as the anxieties intensify and the personal resources of group members for coping diminish.

CHAPTER THREE:

IDENTITY AND ROLE

I. The Elements of Role

The previous chapters have shown that the process of adaptation to the amorphous group object lessens the repressive barrier and with it the stable organization of structural identifications that support the mature identification system. The regressive process is halted (or stabilized) -- and the anxiety over the dedifferentiation of psychic structures and the loss of mature identity defended against -- when the group members work out, as it were, a new defensive structure utilizing projective identification and assigning to each member a function and a meaning with respect to the group as a whole. A condensed way of expressing this would be to say that identity is undermined and gives way to role: the members of the group reconstitute themselves in terms of "agreements" newly worked out on a pre-conscious level between the role demands of the group and the role definitions of individual members.

It is in the forging of these agreements that the individual group members rely upon what I have suggested calling the "archaic role definition," a core component of the identity system synthesized by the ego out of elements derived from early family experience. That archaic role definition is, I believe, a developmental achievement of the ego, its first relatively secure integration of the self and object worlds that provides not only for early defensive needs but also a

sense of reliable continuity of both the self and the external world and of the expectable relations between them.

The existence of the archaic role definition is an hypothesis that it is beyond the scope of this work fully to elaborate. Support for it comes, I believe, from Kernberg's view of developing object relations occurring in three broad stages: from early introjections, through identifications, to ego identity. He has suggested that role is a key aspect of the organization of identifications. "Identifications is a higher-level form of introjection which can only take place when the perceptive and cognitive abilities of the child have increased to the point that it can recognize the role aspects of interpersonal interaction. Role implies the presence of a socially recognized function that is being carried out by the object or by both participants in the interaction." (1976, p. 30) This suggestion is not expanded upon at any length and does not include any reference within the family as a whole, beyond the infant-mother dyad. But it does correspond, roughly, to the three levels of group organization and defense that call upon analogous levels of organization and defense in individual members. The "work group" builds upon and sustains the mature identities and functional abilities of members with an appreciation of the realistic constraints of time, resources, task, etc. Below this is the level at which projective identification

restabilizes the group in terms of role agreements but at the cost of the individual's full access to his functional abilities, mature identity, and appreciation of realistic constraints. Here, splitting and projective identification in the group interact with the role definitions that members defensively seek to activate for themselves. Below this is the level at which the group employs various forms of denial defensively at the cost of not being able to evolve any stable organization for itself and, correspondingly, support any stable identity in role for its members.

Here it is necessary to confine our speculations to a consideration of the general elements that go into the formation of early role identity or what I call the archaic role definition, the elements that reveal themselves to scrutiny as they become manifest in group members responding to the group's regressive process. So far, we have been concerned almost exclusively with the defensive use of role in projective identifications, dynamic patterns in which the group casts about, as it were, for members who will agree to become repositories of dangerous affects or threatened values. The anxiety aroused by the group's regressive process creates role demands by virtue of the defensive strategy of splitting and projective identification. But what is it about the role definitions of members that causes them to respond to those demands, to agree to serve those needs and, in the process, activate roles for themselves?

It is possible to identify, I think, four kinds of elements that constitute a given role identity: object ties, identifications, projective identifications, and "delineations" (projective identifications accepted, originating from significant others). The kinds of elements are of varying importance in different cases and, at times, cannot clearly be entirely differentiated from each other. But in theory at least, they can be distinguished and, thus lend a certain clarity to the effort to grasp the significance that a given role has for an individual at a given moment. I propose to discuss the elements separately, giving due attention to the ways in which they may overlap or alter one into another. Then, in the next section, I will examine the roles of the group members as they were demonstrated in the group interactions in order to illustrate some of the actual ways in which these elements reveal themselves in a given role definition.

Object ties are those relations to external objects that correspond to the internal idea of the object one hopes to find outside, that is to the inner objects that have an "index of externality." (Shafer, 1968) These objects are experienced as gratifying (or frustrating) because it is their presence (or absence) as external objects that, initially, relieves (or fails to relieve) anxiety generated

by the unfulfilled dominant needs of the infant. Thus, although they are internalized by the infant who wishes to possess them in their absence and who may use them to guide his search for their external reappearance, it is the external manifestation of the object that is sought because it is only the external manifestation that carries the promise of relieving the need and thus diminishing the anxiety.

Freud (1926) emphasized the developmental and changing nature of these overwhelming needs for the external object and the corresponding "appropriate determinant of anxiety. Thus, the danger of psychical helplessness is appropriate to the period of life when his ego is immature; the danger of loss of object to early childhood when he still is dependent on others; the danger of castration to the phallic phase; and the fear of his super-ego, to the latency period. Nevertheless, all these danger-situations and determinants of anxiety can persist side by side and cause the ego to react to them with anxiety at a period later than the appropriate one." (S.E., XX, p. 142) That, of course, is the basis for understanding transference: the persistence of the search for the external object, corresponding to the internalized idea of the object, in order to relieve anxiety over an unfulfilled need.

It necessarily follows that the objects thus sought out will vary considerably in their characteristics depending

on the developmental stage reached and the cognitive and perceptual abilities that have matured to grasp the object that is linked with the need (and the anxiety). The "loss of object" Freud refers to above is the maternal object that is relatively constant and "whole," linked by the child with its need to be fed and cared for. But there is an earlier, less complete and integrated object sought out to relieve the anxiety over psychical helplessness. And there is a later, more differentiated object that arouses (or relieves) the anxieties of castration. To put it this way, however, is to slight the varieties and gradations of the object that exist and the combinations (with varying degrees of integration) that link together different needs and their corresponding different objects.

Following Jacobsen's (1964) account of the earliest fused self and object images as the starting point for object relations and their beginning differentiation according to the organization of libidinal and aggressive drives, Kernberg (1976) has suggested that the earliest representations of the object occur in units that bind together an image of the object, an image of the self, and in affect expressing the specific quality of the self-object tie. At first, he suggests, these units are organized by the powerful "irradiating" effect of the libidinal and aggressive affective ties so that two polar objects, as it were, evolve

together with corresponding early self-images, though the negative self-images are projected out in order to preserve the "purified pleasure ego" with its good internalized objects. (How the unit is projected, however, is not explained.) Eventually, these units organized according to these affective polarities are synthesized into more complex representations of the self and object worlds so that self and object become, as it were, the polarities and role the integrative principle. The final developmental achievement for Kernberg in this process is that of mature ego identity which he conceptualizes, following Erikson (1956), as the sense of the on-going continuity, differentiation, and relatedness of the self and the external world of objects.

This brief account glosses over a number of complexities but is perhaps sufficient to indicate, now, the rough nature of the kinds of object ties one might expect to find among the elements of any given role. At the lowest level are the fragmentary self-object-affect units that have not been integrated into a role but which nevertheless may become manifest in the behavior of a group member who is himself poorly integrated and/or is experiencing the kinds of chaotic fragmentation that I suggested in Chapter Two characterizes the group in resorting to various forms of denial. A role, however, is more likely to reveal the presence of a later object tie reflecting the integration of units of positive and

negative valence, to a "good" and/or "bad" maternal object. That object will be likely to have specific properties according to the kind of anxiety it activated in the infant in the infant's experience: with respect to nurturance, comfort, recognition, separation, etc. Later versions of these split objects may incorporate features of control, distance, etc. More complete objects representing ties of an oedipal nature, enter the picture as well -- objects of libidinal-phallic attraction and rivalry -- but with such objects it is more usual to see them after they have undergone defensive splitting so that the manifest attachment is to an object which is linked to a higher-level aim but which nevertheless often lacks the complexity otherwise to be expected.

This account of the external object tie is far from exhaustive and it by no means precludes complications of the tie through projections and identifications superimposed upon the self-object relationship. But it does define one type of element it is possible to discriminate.

Identification. Borrowing from Schafer's (1968) comprehensive definition of identification, we can emphasize aspects of the process specifically relevant to role: the person who identifies with an object, experiences himself as a result as being "like, the same as, and merged with one or more

representations of the object." Thus, the object becomes a part of the self, acquiring an "index of internality" so that it is no longer sought for in the external world.

Freud (1917) emphasized the preservation of the object through identification, a means of installing it within the self and, thus, immune from separation and loss. He also emphasized the primitive, oral nature of the incorporative mechanism and thus the link between identification and primary narcissism, the state in which the self and object are as yet undifferentiated. As a result, identification has been understood as a regressive phenomenon, one that tends to replace external object ties that are experienced as endangered (or endangering) by an experience of merger, with the consequent potential result that those external ties are impoverished. Later, Freud (1923) pointed out how crucial identifications are to building up what he called the "character of the ego" which he said is "a precipitate of abandoned object cathexes."

Jacobson (1964) has emphasized the more developmentally advanced partial identifications based on the child's imitation of the mother that allow for the taking on of characteristics of the object without necessarily abandoning the object tie. The earlier identifications, based on fantasies of merger, continue to be important and may well be the foundation upon which all identifications are built, but these later, partial identifications do not imply a repressive process and

are crucial for building up the structural identifications that are key parts of the ego and super-ego systems.

Schafer (1968), as his definition quoted in part above indicates, sees identification as occurring on roughly three simultaneously interrelated levels -- though one level is likely to be predominant in any given case. Being "the same as" another person is a form of illusory psychological identity in which differences are temporarily suspended or ignored. It sustains a sense of separateness, nevertheless, which is denied in the experience of merger. Being "like" another person, by contrast, implies two distinct objects with differences as well as similarities, perceptions of which are available to secondary process thinking and often lead to a relationship in which similarities with the object are appreciated (or not), compared, or acknowledged in some other fashion. In distinguishing levels of identification, Schafer follows Jacobson, but he emphasizes what he believes to be the simultaneous existence of all three levels.

Thus, identifications occur along a continuum, beginning with the fantasied evocation of primary narcissism and annihilation of separateness. A process like identification with the aggressor emphasizes sameness at the expense of differences for defensive purposes; in contrast to more primitive fantasies of merger it entails a modification of the ego for a specific aim. Partial ego identifications are more advanced yet and

correspondingly can occur with a variety of objects or aspects of objects whose loss (or, even, temporary unavailability) would be of consequence for the developing child. Thus, these "structural identifications" lead to more or less permanent modifications of the psychic structures in response to various developmental needs.

It is important to stress, however, that the self-representations and the self-image can by no means be merely a matter of varied, accumulated identifications but include self-perceptions as well as perceptions of the self originating from others (see the discussion of "delineations" below). Stressing this point is important because of the overwhelming importance of identification in building up not only the psychic structures but the sense of self, and because of the frequent instability and subjective coloring that accompanies self perceptions, especially in early development, rendering them less reliable and available to the ego in building up a self-image.

Projective Identification. Projection is the only means available to the child who has yet to develop repression of discarding threatening or unwelcome self-representations, that is to say self-representations linked with powerful affects or drives arousing anxieties requiring defensive containment. According to Klein (1946) it is also available

to the child as a means of preserving positive self-representations, keeping them safely split off from contamination by negative impulses and lodged outside the self where they are available for subsequent reintrojection.

As discussed in Chapter Two, projective identification occurs along a continuum with respect to the nature of the object into which (or onto which) the projections are made and the nature of the projected contents. In its earliest and most primitive form, we speculated, it is based upon a muscular impulse to eliminate by spitting disagreeable sensations into a vague external region. In this process, Bion (1962) has suggested the importance of the mother's ability to receive these projections, contain and modulate them so that the infant's overwhelming early anxiety is soothed and a tolerance for anxiety along with an intrapsychic means for coping with the absent object develop. Without the presence of such a "holding environment" (Winnicott, 1960a), the infant's projections cannot be contained, tolerance for anxiety cannot be developed, with the result that the projections are experienced as violently destructive to the object insofar as it begins to emerge out of the welter of object representations and annihiliating of the self insofar as that too begins to coalesce. This "annihilating tendency" (Jaffe, 1968) of projection has, of course, pathological outcomes in terms of the infant's ability

to develop a more stable and consistent self and object world along with the internalizations that foster ego development.

But if this "annihilating tendency" is overcome, projective identification fosters the development of self-object differentiation and stability as the child increasingly interacts with a world of real objects that accept his projections but continue to be available to him so that these projections are not lost. Thus, as the object world becomes increasingly differentiated and articulated, a greater variety of specific containers or vehicles for projection become available, along with a greater range and modulation of objects with their associated representations.

The development of repression is crucial, of course, to the integration of self-representations in that it provides an alternative defense for the unwelcome representations that, projected, interfere with reality testing. Thus, a more sophisticated means of disposing of parts of the self emerges. But while the major burden of defense is shifted, projective identification continues to be used. In the family it is often the case that certain members have become traditional and accepted repositories of specific projections so that while a child may have developed the psychic resources to utilize other defenses he may have no incentive to do so. Moreover, under conditions of anxiety that stimulate regression (in peer group settings, for example) projective

identification is resorted to again. (The discussion of regression in groups in Chapter One should suggest how frequent that is.) Thus, more "finely tuned" affects and representations may continue to be subject to projective identification -- well beyond the global "good" and "bad" projections of the infant -- and may be resorted to throughout one's developmental history. The crucial aspect of it that concerns us is that it is resorted to specifically with those elements of the self that are least well integrated into the self-image as that image was shaped within the family context.

A word ought to be said on the identification part of the process, distinguishing it from the process of identification described above. As Malin and Grotstein (1966) pointed out, the point of the process of projective identification is to distance the projected material, but not dispose of it. In orbit, as it were, it becomes a part of what could loosely be described as an enlarged ego, something that retains a bond with the self. That bond may result in a reintrojection <u>per se</u>, that is an identification in the senses described above. Moreover, such identifications may be reprojected -- put back into orbit, as it were. Projective identification, thus, refers to a process of distancing that often includes a conscious disavowal of the projected material but also a felt claim upon it, and it is that sense

of a claim which is referred to by identification as well as, of course, the potential for activating the claim directly through an acknowledgement of sameness or likeness with the projection. The point is important, if only to forestall the misunderstanding that "identification" in projective identification always includes at some point a reintrojection.

The bond or claim that identification in this sense points to, on the part of the projecting subject towards the identified-with object, has two aspects. (See Zinner and Shapiro, 1972, p. 525) One is that the projected part is treated as if it were a self-part, with a kind of intimacy or righteousness felt on the part of the subject and, often, a sense of vicarious participation or covert understanding. The other is that efforts are made to induce the other to justify the projections, to act in conformity with them. Thus, identification in this sense points to a reciprocal relationship between the subject and object, a relationship that distinguishes it from identification in the senses described above which is essentially a one-way process entailing a modification of the subject only.

Clearly, however, when projected material is reintrojected it may easily be confused with and, to some extent, blended with identifications springing directly from the subject's experience of the object. In identification with the aggressor (A. Freud, 1936), for instance, the ego may

develop an identification with the menacing object as a defense against its fear of attack; but it may also identify with aggression it has projected onto the object out of its defensive need to manage its own aggression. That is, at some point the projected aggression may appear to be menacing to the subject again (particularly if the collusive object too successfully obliges in accepting and justifying the projections). In each case the defensive need is different, but it is easy to see how both may be employed in ways it would be difficult if not impossible to discriminate and that, indeed, both defensive needs may interact and be operative alternately.

Delineations. The term originates with Zinner and Shapiro (1972) and refers to parental acts and statements that communicate to a child his parents' image of him. Given the tenuousness of the child's ability to generate and sustain his own self-perceptions under the sway of his shifting emotions and rapid developmental changes, it is easy to see the great impact of parental perceptions on the child, particularly in contributing to his sense of the continuity and consistency of his self vis a vis the objects that lend stability to his life. Thus, the child adopts, as it were, these self-perceptions. But there is a further motivation to accept delineations, particularly those that may not be taken on by

the child without conflict or a sense of loss: the threats that may be more or less manifest that the parental objects will withdraw their affection or care if the child does not agree to accept these delineations.

Zinner and Shapiro see this latter motivation as particularly important in the child's acceptance of what they call "defensive delineations," that is those delineations of the child made out of the parents' defensive needs to use the child as repositories of their own projections. This is the reciporcal of the situation described above, when projective identification establishes a claim on the object to behave suitably, accepting and justifying the subject's projections.

Delineations that lack this defensive urgency originating from the parents or other significant objects in the family, and hence the pressure on the child to accept, usually, then, are significant insofar as they tend to reinforce self-perceptions or identifications. Thus, often, they place a final stamp of confirmation, as it were, upon the self-representation of the child, ensuring that it will have to be integrated into the child's self-image.

II. The Group Members

Unfortunately, far less information about the personal and family histories of the group members is available than would be needed to make this discussion of the elements of their role definition fully adequate. It will be necessary to make do with the information made available by the group members as well as their memories of significant early experiences. That together with inferences based on their behavior in the group will have to guide these speculations. The results are not meant to stand as sufficient accounts of the role definitions of these individuals so much as plausible reconstructions that will help us to understand the processes by which the elements of role combine and are synthesized by individuals into role definitions.

Louise. A physician, like her mother, Louise clearly has been influenced by a primary identification with her mother and her mother's roles. And that is to be seen in a number of ways in which she has assumed care-taking functions throughout her life. As a young girl, she cared for her younger siblings, particularly when her mother was subject to incapacitating post-partum depressions. As an adolescent, she took care of her ill father in the years before his death and then, later, she also housed and cared for her step-father before his death. And in the group, beyond the period of her initial

silence, she inquired about absences, silences, and generally demonstrated a managing and concerned attentiveness that kept things going in accordance with her self-proclaimed group role: active, supportive, "out in there." But it is important to note that, in her mid-thirties, she had as yet no children, and that, while she had had a number of relationships with men, at the time of the group she had no on-going serious relationship that gave promise of leading to marriage and the raising of children. Thus, while she took after her mother professionally and with respect to maternal functions, there are important limitations to those identifications.

Her attitude towards her mother was openly resentful and frustrated -- and contradictory. At various times she called her a "bitch," possessive," "hysterical," "clutching," "demanding," and she complained that her mother seldom called her and that she tended to ignore her on her visits back home. Louise kept in touch with her siblings and her mother, making sure that the family network was maintained, but she felt little appreciation for these efforts and less reciprocity on the part of other family members.

It would seem, then, that her object tie to her mother was an extremely ambivalent one. On the other hand, identifying with her mother and her role, she had made herself into a kind of adjunct to assist and support her in that role, and she looked for appreciation and recognition in return for efforts

which, on some level, she must have felt her "demanding" and "possessive" mother encouraged. On the other, she was enraged at what she took to be continual slights and put downs from a "bitch" who exploited and ignored her, withholding the care Louise continued to feel ought to be hers.

This ambivalence had oedipal aspects to it. She expressed concern about "going beyond" her mother professionally, and described several occasions on which it seemed to her in retrospect she had sabotaged her own efforts to do so. She expressed bitter outrage at her mother for having obliterated the traces of her father immediately following his death so that it was as if he had never lived -- and, as a result, as if the traces of her devotion and the privileges of her position with respect to him that she had earned were also destroyed. Moreover, she reported that her father had exacted a death-bed pledge from her that she take care of her mother, a pledge that expressed what she must have taken as an affirmation of her superior care-taking capacities. And she "took in" and cared for her step-father after he had been divorced by her mother.

But the most powerful and persistent aspects of her resentment towards her mother appear to have derived from earlier conflicts in which she came to feel deficits in her mother's relation to her as a mother, caring for her and providing the kind of attention and recognition she still continued to crave.

One rather late memory was particularly significant in that respect. In high school in the period following her father's death when she was living in the home of a friend, her friend suggested to Louise that she call her mother with whom she had had no communication for several months. Her mother had remarried and moved away, leaving Louise in effect to fend for herself. Taking the suggestion casually as a good one, Louise called her on the phone, only to burst into totally unexpected and uncontrollable sobs when she heard her mother's voice answer on the other end of the line -- so powerful was the wish within her to be reconciled with the "good" mother who would understand and comfort her.

It is easier to understand, now, how Louise's primary identification with her mother became elaborated and reinforced with these ambivalent object ties and colored her oedipal rivalry. Following in her mother's footsteps but doing a better job than she had done provided Louise with the opportunity to console and comfort her mother's damaged victims and indirectly assert her mother's deficiencies as a nurse and mother. In this sense, all her accomplishments as a nurse and maternal surrogate could serve to convict her mother of her inadequacies and ill intentions. On the other hand, she continued to look to her mother or to surrogates to manifest the care she continued to believe must be available if only she could find the means to tap it or remove the

obstacles that stood in the way.

We can understand Louise's ambivalence towards her maternal object as a rather violent and poorly integrated yoking together of powerful and disparate "good" and "bad" images, images it is relatively easy to discriminate as we have but which in Louise's family experience must have lent a bewildering and contradictory quality to her perception of her mother as well as the other family members linked with her in different and also seemingly contradictory ways. Thus, to the "bad" mother component of Louise's maternal object were linked her damaged victims; clearly, they were manifest for Louise in the father and step-father she nursed, but they must have also been perceived in the siblings that required Louise's attention and care, which the "bad" mother would not or could not provide. The "good" mother, on the other hand, was linked for Louise with the paternal rivals for her mother's attention who took her away from her, barring her access, as well as with the not-to-be-satisfied sibling rivals, who demanded the attention she herself craved, and who may even have been blamed by Louise for driving her mother into the depressions that made her unavailable to them all, thus forcing Louise to provide the care they would not appreciate.

If we now add to this picture of the ambivalent family scene that Louise perceived the part played by projective

identifications we can more fully appreciate the confusing complexity of her family experience and its tendency to resolve itself into a defensive splitting that segregated the object constellations surrounding the "good" and "bad" components of the ambivalent maternal object.

Louise's own feelings of victimization, for example, derived from her experience of the frustrating "bad" component of the ambivalent object and had to be defended against. In caring for her father and step-father, thus, she was able empathically to care for her own feelings of neglect and damage that she projected onto them, not only distancing herself in that way from these feelings in herself but also seeming to meet them, in a sense, through her devoted care. And one might imagine that in her professional life, caring for damaged children, she had the opportunity to invoke projective identification repeatedly in the same way as she had in her family, caring for the siblings who suffered from her mother's depressed withdrawal; her capacity for projective identification here may well have lent a particular involvement and dedication to her work with child victims. (We might speculate also that her own initial identifications with her mother as a depressed, suffering object were dealt with in this way as well.)

Correspondingly, into the "bad" mother who is seen to have caused this damage, Louise projected her own destructive

rage arising out of her deprivation and frustration. Such rage must have been troubling to her because of its persistent ferocity -- but it must also have threatened to interfere with her own ability to take on the role of the good mother herself who cares for (and empathizes with) the "bad" mother's victims.

Alternating with these projections into the "bad" mother and her victims were a set of projections into the "good" mother and Louise's rivals. The greedy siblings for whom she experienced herself caring as her mother's adjunct were objects into whom she could project her own feelings of frustrated demandingness -- feelings of which she was powerfully aware in herself -- blaming them for their insatiable appetites, controlling them, and in the process distancing and controlling her own greed. Correspondingly, she could project into the devoted, caring maternal object her own tenderness and concern, preserve it there in safekeeping, as it were, and then borrow it back in her role as maternal adjunct. Thus, she could hope to mother appropriately on behalf of her own primary maternal object without giving up the hope that such mothering might be available to herself as well.

In Louise's family, as a child, she must have alternated between states in which the family was split and organized in such ways around these different defensive

strategies and states that represented a greater degree of cohesiveness and integration around the ambivalent maternal object. Different environmental stresses as well as intrapsychic pressures probably accounted for the variations among these patterns, though it is hard to imagine that Louise was ever far from some degree of bewilderment about "what was going on" in her family.

In the group, however, the situation tended to be far more coherent and stable. Under the sway of the regressive process, Louise seized upon the female consultant as the "good" mother and activated that part of her defensive strategy that projected her caring strength into the female consultant and her unsatisfied craving into the unruly members who were unappreciative of what the "good" mother had to offer. Under these circumstances it became possible to see clearly the defensive delineation of the group that she took on, much as she must have taken it on in her family to protect and preserve the "good" mother there: she assumed the blame attaching to the disciplinarian who keeps the members in line and reminds them of their ingratitude and short-comings. Thus, she became a receptacle for the anger in the group over its deprivation -- she volunteered, in effect, to be the "bad" mother who kept alive and cherished the "good" mother. Perhaps, in that way, she continued to hope it would be available to her, that, indeed, she would

have earned its gratitude and deserved its special attention.

The "bad" mother as Louise's object was kept out of the group entirely, together with its corresponding set of victims. Completely split off, it seems to have become manifest in the real mother she continued to maintain contact with; she continually reported in the group on her misunderstood and unappreciated efforts to reach some accord with her and on the array of her family victims with whom she also continued to keep in touch. (A similar manifestation of this pattern surrounding the "bad" maternal object seems to have occurred in a difficult work situation involving a withholding supervisor, who upset Louise considerably, and the child patients Louise cared for.)

Louise recounted on several occasions that she had been viewed in her family as "crazy" -- erratic, unpredictable, volatile -- a delineation that she seems to have accepted, though without much understanding. That is, she seems to have taken it as a back-handed tribute to the energy and vitality with which she threw herself into her roles in a family which she, in turn, viewed as somewhat "crazy," too. We have seen in Chapter One the bewilderment, nonetheless, with which she seemed relatively comfortable and which must have been somewhat familiar to her in her family given the inconsistent attributions of the family members that link with the ambivalent maternal object and its "good" and "bad" components.

"Crazy" thus seems to have served Louise as a half-deprecating, half-humorous way of linking and labeling the inconsistency she experienced in her own identity. Caring for and empathizing with her siblings, on the one hand, calling up and trying to keep the family together, she felt she deserved an appreciation that was a far cry from the enmity she invited by her conflicting wish to preserve the "good" mother, on the other hand, by being admonitory and judgmental.

This poorly integrated identity that Louise nevertheless managed to keep together with her energy and hard work was what she wanted to remedy by coming into the group in the role of silent observer. She hoped, by dint of an impressive "will power" that so often served her well, to assume a more satisfactory role. But what happened, under the pressure of the regressive process, was a decomposition of her role definition into its archaic and unintegrated components. The energetic, vital, well-intentioned but "crazy" image gave way to the role of mother's willing scapegoat, on the one hand, and her empathic, dedicated victim, on the other. In her family, it seems likely that both were required of her or, at least, supported. But she carried the burden of that conflict and confusion in the parts of her archaic role definition into settings where it no longer served her or her fellow group members as well as it did her and her family.

Carmen

As the brief description in the Introduction suggested, Carmen's primary tie in her family was to her mother. She experienced herself as her mother's helper and confidante, growing up in a large family with one older sister and four younger siblings and with her father, a sailor, frequently away from home. Thus, she was drawn into a supportive maternal role. And she seems to have modelled herself on her mother, to some extent, as well. At the time of the group she had a 5-year-old child, from an early marriage. (Divorced from the child's father, she had recently remarried.) But she was significantly different from her mother in that she was currently working towards an advanced professional degree, whereas her mother had never worked outside the home in her life.

Carmen's tie with her mother, as we have already had reason to speculate, was complex. She openly expressed her sense of having been deprived of mothering by virtue of her supportive role as a child. With the clamoring of her younger siblings for attention, she felt she had had to renounce her own claims for attention and, indeed, assume an adjunct, maternal role -- but she also felt she had done that not without some resentment. (Perhaps in giving her own child to her mother to care for, as she frequently had for periods of time, she was restating a claim for maternal care on

behalf of her child that she had renounced for herself.) But there was rivalry as well: rivalry with her siblings (especially, no doubt, her older sister) for the superior standing and intimacy to be derived from the mother by being able to respond to her needs -- and rivalry with the mother herself over being a superior maternal figure as well as for the father's attention. It's necessary to speculate about this in the absence of detailed information about her early family life, but this maternal rivalry is suggested in Carmen's pursuit of a professional career, in which she would outstrip her mother, and the wish for standing vis a vis the father is strongly implied in Carmen's memory, cited in the Introduction, of not daring to ask for her father's hand when he was holding two of her sibling's hands out on a walk. That is, one might see that she held out for a special place with the father, not requiring a hand as a child might, though she also wanted it, because her tie with her mother helped her to know that other relationships than that of a child with the father were possible.

Thus, renunciation and suppressed conflict appear to have been the recurrent and powerful themes of Carmen's childhood. Not only did she feel the need to give up her position of dependency and her wish for maternal care with respect to both parents -- in order to preserve her special place next to her mother -- but she also had to suppress her

rivalrous impulses as well in order to continue to deserve that special place, acting as a good maternal substitute with her siblings and continuing to earn her mother's confidence. And, given the fact that her father was most often away from home, there was in effect no permanently available special place next to him that might present itself as an alternative, when she was tempted to engage her mother for it.

Carmen's tie to a powerful but withholding maternal object that she internalized as a result was perhaps most vividly demonstrated in the eighth session of the group described in Chapter Two, when "driven away" by the male consultant's interpretation and "brought back" by the female consultant to do this and wondered if that meant that the male consultant was "nurturant." That is, the power she experienced as emanating from the female consultant had to be split off from the expectations of nurturance that were simultaneously aroused by the maternal object, split off and located elsewhere. The object, around whom she revolved and which had the power to recall her from the "black hole," could not be expected to nurture.

But the presence of that consistently aroused and consistently renounced wish for nurturnace put Carmen in a kind of limbo of isolation and detachment. That is, she had learned to watch carefully for the nuances of expectation

and demand exhibited by members of the group, observing the constellations of need that manifested themselves, but at the price of keeping herself aloof, without manifest needs of her own. At one point in the group she observed that she resists feeling gratitude because she sees it as controlling, adding that she has a hard time accepting help of any sort. At another point, responding to a comment of the female consultant about the withholding of expressions of feeling in the group, she said with rare reflective candor that she didn't permit herself to experience loneliness -- she was "too vulnerable." "Remaining aloof and distant protects from risk" -- the risk of her own demands that might be rebuffed but also the risk of a real separation as well in which she would have to give up her hunger, her hope of satisfaction.

Carmen once characterized her role as a "mediator." Assisting her mother, she stepped into the conflicting claims and counterclaims of her siblings, arbitrating because she had no claims of her own. As her self-proclaimed role definition implies, she has nothing of her own to give, no generous supplies of affection with which to supplement what her mother had to offer. And, indeed, in her interactions with the group members she was consistently brief, detached and dry -- at times her comments verged on the ascerbic. It was as if she simply was not available except as an

observer and occasional commentator. Consequently, she was not available for projections either, so little of herself was demonstrated and, thus, able to be responded to by the other group members.

There is some evidence to suggest that she kept alive hopes of a relationship with a male object that would help her break out of this pattern. José, of course, was the group member the group expected her to pair with to complete the set of pairs, though his homosexuality and sense of isolation in the group kept him from cooperating in such an arrangement. Carmen, however, seemed to show a somewhat greater sympathy for José than for the other members. In the third session she accused the female consultant of setting him up by referring to the seating arrangement that appeared to leave only one seat for him to occupy on his late arrival -- as if the group itself had not set him up. Later in the session she defended him against Bruce. In the following session which began with a discussion of pairs, José rebuffed her, in effect, by disclaiming any link on his part to her, and she was silent for the entire remaining hour of the group session except for one comment about one other group member's rebuff of another. The following session, when José was away, she came reluctantly, she said, in part to dispel fantasies that she knew would be aroused in the group if the two of them had both been gone -- but

she also participated more frequently and extensively in the group discussion than on any other occasion. I think it's possible to see that in so doing she was also dispelling whatever fantasies may have been aroused in her about a special relationship with a male. She explicitly disclaimed that his rejection of her was a matter of concern, though she admitted that she had been affected by it. Interestingly, she ended her comments in the group session by affirming the power of the female consultant, as she experienced it, and sharing her fantasy that the male consultant was in the group to learn from the female consultant.

It is hard to say much about Carmen's tie with the male object with any confidence, apart from the fact that it appears to represent a dangerous wish and be closely tied to her sense of the maternal object's power. I suspect that she harbors the wish to receive from it the nurturance she felt obliged to give up from her mother. And indeed, it is hard to say a great deal about Carmen's specific ties with the maternal object except that it is shrouded in renunciation and a self-imposed defensive isolation which, in turn, has had such an impact on her role definition in the family and subsequent groups.

But it is apparent that that object tie to the mother is ambivalent and complex in ways beyond our grasp. Attributing

all that power to the maternal object -- to give as well as withhold, to punish as well as reward -- Carmen projected and continues to project into her a myriad of fantasies at whose impact we can only guess. Moreover, Carmen's delineations in her family of origin are shrouded in mystery. But the consequences of all that upon her group relations and the role she continually sought out and seeks in groups is quite clear. In effect, she says, I can observe and mediate but I cannot give or receive.

But that is in striking contrast to the way in which she presents herself, which is to say as a person at the center of the group, thinking about, responding to, and caring for all its members. Carmen wants to assume a position of maternal assistance, but as the regressive process in the group made clear in exposing her own frustrated wishes for dependency, she is too bound up in controlling her own needs to respond truly to the needs of others. Hence, she cannot afford to join the group, as she must have felt she did not really belong to her family. The median position she assumes is really outside, aloof from the real demands of others, which she cannot meet, and the inner pressure of her own hunger, which she cannot admit.

Arthur

There is far from sufficient information about Arthur's parents to form an adequate account of his identifications with them, but what is known suggests the broad outlines of identifications with both. As a photographer, he did not depart radically from what either parent represented: his father, a printer of academic texts, and his mother, who was establishing a career for herself as a sculptor.

Arthur's relationship to his mother's field is especially interesting in light of his explicit attitude towards his parents which was negative. He described his mother as "overbearing," "aggressive," and "hysterical," the initiator of frequent fights and scenes he found it impossible to avoid at home. His father, by contrast, was "passive," "docile," "intelligent;" Arthur complained that he was consistently unavailable to him in the family to modulate and control the mother's outbursts. For the duration of the group, Arthur had virtually no contact with his parents as he had found it too upsetting to see them and encounter his mother's scenes. But he did retain contact with his three younger brothers and sister who continued to live at home.

It seemed clear that his primary object tie was to the frightening, explosive maternal object he seemed constantly on his guard against. His accounts of his family repeatedly and consistently exposed that fear, and it could

be seen in the group as well. In the first session, for example, he was alertly, warily tuned in to signs of aggression on the part of the consultants, especially the female consultant, and he was the group member who voiced relief that the consultants had not been killed off, and, indeed, were available to protect the group; ultimately, he settled on Louise as the embodiment of his dangerous object, but there were repeated indications that he sensed danger from the female consultant and her great power, as he experienced it.

It is far less clear which objects he felt he could turn to for comfort and protection. The paternal object had been disappointing in this respect and he voiced similar feelings about the male consultant who was seen as surprisingly insightful but lacking the power to counterbalance the female consultant, to exercise significant power. He linked up with the male members of the group, however, in a defensive alliance that offered some protection. To Jose at the start of the first session he expressed gratitude that he had gone first, thus making him feel better. More regularly, however, he linked up with Bruce. In the fourth session he reported, "I felt I might have been banking on Bruce as I banked on my brother's support. But then I felt I couldn't rely on him -- sensing he wasn't there -- a fantasy." But while it was clear that Bruce, an only child,

was not there for Arthur in fact, that fantasy seemed to exert a continuing hold over him. Arthur, throughout the duration of the group as he responded to Bruce, often seemed to feel what Bruce was feeling, and showed a tendency to forget the unfriendly remarks Bruce made about him.

But Arthur was also attentive and responsive to the other members of the group. On one occasion he wanted to postpone a discussion about the group's response to Carmen until she arrived; he often expressed concern about absences or silences and appreciation towards those who, like himself, sought to bring the group together. He sympathized with expressions of anxiety about the group and, once, was afraid he had heard Jose say he intended to leave the group. On innumerable occasions and far more than any other member, Arthur seemed to be attached to the group as a whole, anxious to preserve its unity, enquiring after specific members, holding it together in his mind, as it were, by his anxious attention to all its parts, especially those that seemed threatened by detachment from the whole.

It was as if the group as a whole was the countervailing object he looked to as protection against the fearful maternal object. As an amorphous object, the group could contain him as a part, including him within its extended boundaries; it also possessed some other semi-differentiated parts that seemed particularly important for him to hold onto within

the whole. His fraternal object, embodied in Bruce, was one such differentiated part of the whole, as was the paternal object embodied in the male consultant. Other members of the group became other parts of this entity at various times to fulfill other functions. But they all belonged together as parts that together with Arthur himself provided a reassuring sense of containment face to face with the threat that seemed to lurk outside or apart from it.

But Arthur's sense of protection was by no means his whole experience of the group. Much as he tended to its parts and attempted to establish an appreciated and secure position for himself within it, he often had a vague, dissatisfied sense of what he had to give up in order to get that. He expressed several times the sense that he was manipulated in the group, jerked about like a puppet on a string. He attributed that to the consultants, and it is true that his felt need to monitor them did cause him to pay a strict regard to their interpretations, occasionally at the expense of following his own line of thought. But it is also true that he felt similarly obliged to pay attention to the other members. At one point, empathizing with what he took to be a comparable dilemma for Jose, he remarked that he knew what it meant to feel "like you have to be available to everyone else -- nothing left for you." Thus, being in the group was often confusing, as he put it

in the ninth session: getting ideas stimulated by others, then censoring them. "Sometimes practicing what to say, sometimes being pulled by something else somebody else says and cutting off what I was thinking, and not really being sure of what to talk about."

Arthur seemed caught in a kind of oscillation, as a result, between the protective but confining and bewildering group and the more clearly defined but frightening maternal object. If we now attempt to take account of how this object world served as a vehicle for his projective identifications, we may grasp the significance of this oscillating pattern more fully.

The angry maternal object served as a vehicle for his own projected feelings of rage. At one point he expressed his understanding of this process in him vis a vis the female consultant -- and we may speculate on the untempered, destructive feelings of greed and frustration he carried around inside of him with respect to that object, feelings he would attempt to get that object to bear on his behalf. But that process had not worked for him as a child with respect to his maternal object -- for reasons which are beyond speculation at this point -- so that his experience of the maternal object remained frightening: the object that provoked his rage had added to it that very destructive rage now confronting him, as it were, from outside that he projected into it.

It is reasonable to suppose that this terrifying experience provoked -- and still provokes in group settings -- a defensive regression to the amorphous object that contained some differentiated parts -- a father and siblings -- that would in fact serve as a more acceptable vehicle for his projective identifications. Arthur, as it were, dispersed himself in the family group.

Observations of the group suggest the broad outlines of how he continued to accomplish this defensive maneuver. Bruce, as we saw, was identified as a "fantasy" of how he banked on his brother's support; at a later session, he expressed the fear that in the group he lived through Bruce. For him, Bruce represented the strong one who is able to initiate matters because he is able to withstand pressures. Arthur projected into him the strength that he felt he did not possess sufficiently but need to possess in order to stand up to the terrifying maternal object, but which he then felt he gave up entirely in withdrawing to the family group or, perhaps more precisely, located for safe-keeping in a semi-differentiated fraternal object within the amorphous family object. Then, maintaining a close identification with him, he is able to experience vicariously the emotions he himself did not wish to bear.

José became the locus of Arthur's profound resentments, feelings projected into José by other members of the group

as well but by no one who maintained so sensitive an alertness to the intensity of his feelings and his explosive potential and so concerned to soothe and support him. For Arthur, José represented the group member not only most likely to seethe with unexpressed resentment but also the one most able to contain it, and that was crucial as it was Arthur's own rage projected onto the maternal object that he felt was unable to contain it that was responsible in large part for his regressive attachment to the group object.

A female member seemed to be the repository for his feelings of fear; he maintained a solicitous sensitivity to her anxieties. Louise and the female consultant, on the other hand, were repositories of aggression -- attenuated and diminished by the presence of other projections within the context of the amorphous group object, and particularly the projections onto Jose.

Once the group was underway, Arthur unvaryingly sat next to the male consultant, until displaced by Jose -- which caused him to feel considerable anger. Clearly, he derived a sense of security from the presence of an object who, in his experience, did not do much or possess much strength but which understood what was going on and could be counted on to survive the vicissitudes of group and family life, like his father. Next to this stable vantage

point, Arthur seemed to feel more able not only to look out upon the group object -- with the dangerous female object represented by the female consultant, directly opposite, under full surveillance -- but also to manage the complex interplay that was his emotional life, as it were, displaced and displayed throughout the circle of members.

Arthur reported that his role in his family had been that of leader and defender of his brothers against his mother in the emotional absence of his father. The evidence of the group suggests otherwise. But it may well be that we can understand his role in the group as being designed, in part, precisely to avoid a family role that placed too great a burden upon him. That is, it may well have been the case that family dynamics imposed a delineation upon him as the bearer of rage directed at his mother, so that he felt unwillingly but irresistibly drawn into battle with her. In that sense, he could have been a fight leader of the family group, in Bion's sense of the term. We can only speculate about that, of course, but it would not be hard to imagine several circumstances within the family leading him to carry aggressive feelings for either or both of his parents and/or his brothers. If that were the case, that would have considerably intensified the aggressive feelings Arthur experienced initially towards his depriving maternal object, onto which he already tended to project, defensively, his own hostility. Additionally

burdened by the hostility of the family group, channeled, as it were, through him towards his mother, he may have been thrust into a painful and virtually intolerable though inescapable leadership role.

If that was the case, then Arthur's regressive effort to submerge himself in the group may be understood as a strategy not only to defend himself against the menacing maternal object, inflated with the threats of his own projected rage, but also to guard against the manipulations of the group that might, were it not for his observant watchfulness, attempt to thrust him into a role in which he would feel compelled to assume and discharge its accumulated rage as well.

Arthur presented himself as a friendly, obliging and concerned person, and, certainly, a superficial observation of his behavior in the group would support this view of him. His attentiveness to the group members, his concern for the unity of the group, and his willing if somewhat low-keyed participation in the group discussions confirmed a sociable identity. He seldom evidenced signs of anger or upset -- even when the group was subject to considerable stress and showing signs of significant regression. It took a subtle observation to see the way in which he had defended himself by disappearing into the group itself, infiltrating the group object by dispersing himself among its parts; in that way

he distanced himself from his affects and kept control over them, but he also bound the group together with his guarded attention and kept control over its potential efforts to manipulate him -- a manipulation which, to some extent, he had to permit if he was to be able to maintain the group as an object into which he could disappear. Thus, he defined a role for himself as a watchful shadow, everywhere and nowhere, simultaneously present and absent.

Bruce

An only child, Bruce exhibited an extremely strong tie to a powerful maternal object, a weaker competitive rivalry with a paternal object with whom there were also clear signs of an identification, and vague, shifting relations with the members of the group who might have been expected to play the roles of siblings had any of those roles existed for him in his family of origin.

"Mother's ship could never sink," he exclaimed on one occasion in the group to express his sense that his mother had unfailingly been available to him in his childhood -- and, even now, continued to be. He described her as "assertive," "extended," "intrusive" and, in that, implied that the task he faced as a child, far from reassuring himself of her availability, was defending himself against her too demonstrative claims upon him. But his behavior in the group

showed the continuing profound importance of the maternal link to him -- as well as his efforts to maintain some control over it.

Repeatedly, he expressed his sense of the power of the female consultant and the value of her interpretations. Not only did he pay attention to her comments, remarking on several occasions that the group did not heed them sufficiently -- in marked contrast to the criticisms and equivocations with which he greeted the male consultant's comments -- but also he tended, more often than not, to sit next to her in the group. A striking occasion on which he did not has already been described in Chapter Two, when, in the group's third session, he and Arthur sat flanking the male consultant, blocking him with their extended feet in what Bruce referred to as an "aborted take-over plot" that had as one of its aspects the intention to seat José next to the female consultant to "neutralize" her "power." The ploy expressed, I think, Bruce's ambivalence: that is, he did not want to wrest power away from her, and he certainly did not wish to invest it in the male consultant, who was the one he actually blocked in an effort to split him off from the female consultant; but he did seem to want to exert some countervailing influence, neutralizing a power he must have felt unable to resist or modulate. It seemed, at times, to exert an irresistible, frightening spell.

More typically, Bruce tended to withdraw from the object, however, attempting to modulate its power over him by maintaining a distance and playing hard to get. He described an early memory in which, returning from a trip away from home, he deliberately concealed his spontaneous expression of pleasure on seeing his parents; significantly, as he recalled it, his father had caught his smile and chided him for withholding it from his mother. During the group's eighth session, he described this tendency in himself as receiving, in effect, a message from others that says, "Where are you?" to which he tends to reply, "Come and get me." He added that he felt he communicated to others the need to be protected, like a little boy.

In this, there are indications that his behavior parallels that of his paternal object. He described his father as "passive," "quiet," "docile" -- in marked contrast to his intrusive maternal object. And he expressed his disappointment towards the end of the seventh session that the male consultant could never be in control, "could never be autonomous," though he felt respect for him. Thus it seems that, for Bruce, the paternal object seems caught in the same web as he, unable or unwilling to assert himself independently. But also it seems as if the paternal object acts on behalf of or as an agent for the maternal object, objecting for her when he withholds his smile and requiring

to be split off from her -- as in the third session when he attempted to "neutralize" her "power" -- for Bruce to restore some measure of control to himself.

It is as if, for Bruce, there is really only one object -- with appendages or satellites who revolve around her, too fascinated and/or too weak to get free. And this seems to connect with the thought he expressed in his initial interview with the two consultants, a fear that self-assertion on his part would destroy the family system. Again in the group he expressed the fantasy that if he were to be more direct he would provoke a catastrophic response, "anger, sadness, hysteria." That is, it seems as if there is one world of interlocking parts to which he belongs, so that an assertion of independence would shake the whole. The object would not willingly let go one of its parts -- or the parts dared not detach themselves from the object. And the part that is Bruce feels "shallow," "spoiled," and at times engaged in a "masquerade" of adulthood.

The preponderance of evidence suggests that the primary issue for Bruce in his relation to this object is not the threat of fusion but rather the conflict of control versus autonomy characteristic of the anal stage. That is, Bruce's object does not endanger his separate existence but holds onto him -- in his experience -- with the threat of domination, to which he responds by witholding. Correspondingly, the

object is an ambivalent one; that is, in addition to the extremely powerful security and comfort he attributes to it, he fears its power to control him, its malevolent potential. His struggle is to neutralize the threat it poses and the conflicts within himself with respect to it that cause him both to seek it out continually but also evade its grasp.

The struggle, in short, is between a powerful wish to depend on the object and a somewhat more problematic desire to assert his independence from it. Thus, his own strivings for autonomy are continually subverted and compromised by his own inclinations towards an anaclitic relationship. It is this, I think, that lends a sham quality to his sense of his own adulthood as he himself continues to ask subtly to be taken care of, to be permitted to be a little boy. And it is this conflict that converts his moves towards independence into a game of hide and seek: he removes himself from the object but then drops clues as to his whereabouts, his willingness to be found and rejoined to the object -- "Come and get me."

This ritualistic outcome to his conflict over dependency colors his relationship with all the other objects of his world, in their condition of semi-attachment to his primary maternal object. That is, we have already seen that the paternal object is essentially docile, passive, incapable

of autonomy, and, in that, bearing a close relationship with Bruce himself. But the parallels are disclaimed and obscured beneath a carping and competitive relationship he maintains with the paternal object. As pointed out earlier, he continually disagreed with or questioned the sufficiency or precision of the male consultant's interpretations. Thus he appeared to be engaged in a competitive rivalry that confirmed his sense of independence and gave vent to his assertive impulses. But it is also true that in so doing he spared the maternal object his criticisms while reaffirming his independence from her agent. He also preserved his primary tie of allegiance to her and, thus, his claim on her care, setting himself against the object that dared to be independent and make remarks that might deviate from her perceptions or the high standards of her thoroughly adequate (and precious) interpretations.

This bears the earmarks of a partial or provisional splitting of the object in which, at times, parts of his discontent with the object itself is discharged into its split off appendage -- the paternal object -- perhaps at points of intensified conflicts over dependency. (It may well be that such splits are bridged, to some extent, by the thought that the disappointing paternal object is, after all, an agent of the maternal object and that she is to be blamed, for having such an inadequate appendage -- i.e. for having

burdened her son with such a father.)

Bruce's relations with the other group members were also bound up with his conflicts over dependency, though without the consistency of pattern he exhibited with respect to the paternal object. In putting down Arthur, for example, -- who, because of his own needs for an ally continually made himself available to Bruce to be put down -- he demonstrated his contempt for Arthur's vulnerability and weakness, Arthur's dependency on him. At various points, for example, Bruce expressed his sense that Arthur had the least leadership potential in the group, that he had followed Bruce into it, that he wanted "love and attention," and he joked that he was Arthur's "guru," like Jim Jones. Thus Bruce appears to have projected into Arthur his own dependency wishes and disclaimed them, in order to attempt to resolve his conflicts and affirm, as in his ritualistic encounters with the paternal object, his sham autonomy.

Other members of the group were also treated on various occasions as vehicles for projective identification in Bruce's efforts to defend against his conflicts. At one point, for example, he experienced Louise's going out on a limb as a bid for attention -- thus projecting his own exhibitionistic impulse into her. And frequently he used José, as did most members of the group, as a repository for his feelings of resentful anger, and then backed off from him as a dangerous,

potentially explosive object.

In all these interactions, however, Bruce maintained a sense of himself as attractive and good. That is, he seems to have internalized a delineation -- perhaps from a mother who lavished her attentions on him, providing the basis for his "extended" maternal object -- as a precious object, who would be sought out again and again, no matter how hard to get he played at being. We can not know the basis of that value, arising out of the mother's experience. But we can see clearly that that value, internalized, has played its part in creating Bruce's role as the precious child who can count on being desired, who can do no wrong, provided he engages in mock competitions and assertions that do not endanger his maternal tie.

Outside the group, Bruce possesses an identity as an attractive, competent person, well able to work on his own and live by himself. But under the spell of the group's regressive process which evokes the maternal object so powerfully with its fantasies of dependency (and, I think, in dyadic relationships as well that also evoke that fantasy) Bruce's objects and self tend towards merger. He wishes for a reunion such as he must have experienced repeatedly and powerfully as a child with his maternal object. He stems that regressive process, however, before his objects and his self have been reabsorbed into the maternal object, with a kind of

obstinate or defiant assertion of autonomy. The ambivalent object gives way to an object split into parts, each one of which maintains a quasi-separateness that permits it to serve as a repository for a part of Bruce's ambivalent feelings and helps Bruce maintain the quasi-separateness of his own self. He defies the object to conquer him. At the same time, he refuses to give up the wish for merger with it. Thus his ambivalence is played out as a kind of ritual drama in the object world with Bruce essentially in the role of passive observer.

We can think of his role in the group as that of the "spoiled" child in the sense that he, thus, cannot and need not make up his mind about what he wants, which direction (regression or growth) he wishes to move in. But we should also bear in mind that the "spoiled" child, in a sense, has had childhood and adulthood spoiled for him. Each represents a state of deprivation with which he cannot come to terms: as an adult, he is deprived of the adulation and nurturance he has been led to expect; as a child, he is deprived of the autonomy he requires. He cannot be satisfied -- and he will not satisfy.

José

The youngest of five children in his family, José seems to have had as difficult a time finding a place for himself

in his family as he did in the group. "I will find a place for myself," he reported to the two consultants in his initial interview, "but it will cost me." Characteristically in groups, he said, he was "in and out," reacting to a powerful conflict between being himself and being a group member. But, in fact, the conflict manifested itself as between two roles for himself as a group member: in one role he was "in" the group, initiating discussions, questioning and demonstrating concern for the other members; in the other role, he was "out," thinking about the group and the experiences it aroused in him in isolation. In the latter role, he felt as if he was not a member and had no place or function to fulfill; yet it was clear that being "out" was at least as much a mode of relationship with the group for himself (as it had been in his family) as well as for the group members who used him, in that role, for their own purposes.

The key to understanding this alternating "in and out" pattern is José's relationship to his maternal object which was profoundly troubling to him. In his "out" role it is easy to see how he turned his back on the maternal entity represented by the group as a whole as well as any part contained within it; as he put it on one occasion, he felt the group to be controlled by women. "In" the group, on the other hand, his behavior was no less colored by his

dread of the maternal object, only now embodied in the female consultant, whom he would consistently ignore, except on those occasions when he reported finding her interventions unhelpful or hostile; but he was closer to her and adapted different defensive strategies.

José described his father as an alive and vivid presence during his childhood, though he had frequently been away from home. He longed for closeness with him, thinking of him as a man who was able to combine love and sexuality. On one occasion, he described him as "proud," "angry," and "frustrated" -- qualities he felt he shared -- and, on another, as "good" but "weak" -- "human," by this referring, among other things, to his chronic alcoholism. His mother, by contrast, was less real to him; he could not "see the person in her so well," though he described her as "persevering and sacrificial" -- which were also qualities he felt he shared with her. On another occasion in the group he strongly implied that he saw her as "solid" or, perhaps, wished to see her so.

Thus José identified parts of himself with both parents, and discriminated them in ways that provide clues as to how those identifications relate to his two contrasting group roles. His father, frequently away from home and "frustrated," seemed to provide the prototype for José's "out" role in which José, also like his father, would be angry (seething

with unexpressed rage) and proud or indifferent and aloof to the opinions of the group members. In his "in" role, however, he kept trying to initiate discussions and to demonstrate his interest and concern for the group members, and, in so doing, he illustrated the persevering and sacrificial qualities he attributed to his mother.

We have already seen, in Chapter One, that José was the first to speak in the group's first session and earned the gratitude of a number of members who conferred on him the role of "the initiator." But that, almost immediately, led to his doubting that his having broken the silence was necessarily good, seeking (and receiving) reassurance from others. That phase of group interaction was superceded by Bruce's efforts to place Louise in a leadership position, which provoked José's expression of anxiety about having a "space to breathe." Following that, he spoke of his need to find a proper distance in the group: "I feel that no one can antagonize the group, but I don't feel like being too pleasant or too cautious. I want to respect but don't mean to be devoted." He then tried to get someone else to speak of what she wished to get out of the group, lapsing into silence until after Louise's assertion of leadership, at which point he commented that he perceived the women in the group as "very controlling, and I try to sabotage that." He added that he hoped to learn better from the group how to do that. "I keep

shifting back and forth from past to present in this group. I'm into some personal things in myself, so I'm putting the group out -- out of my present."

This sequence illustrates with exceptional clarity José's shift from his "in" to his "out" role. "In" he is anxious but feels compelled to act on behalf of the group, to respond to its needs. As his language suggests when he feels the need to begin moving out under the threat of female domination, his "in" role is one of cautious devotion, a stance he tries to recapture with respect to a member's particular needs before abandoning it. Two of the women in the group are, thus, positive figures for him, women whom he can try to help -- along with Arthur, towards whom he has comparable inclinations. They stand in marked contrast to Louise and, of course, the female consultant who represent the dread "controlling" maternal object which, at this early point in the group history is less compelling to him because, among other things, they have spoken little or not at all. But it is also true, as José's heroic initiating function attests, he has an extremely powerful wish to be "in" the group and so assume this care-taking function.

José's caring feelings towards two female members in his "in" role seem to reflect his feelings towards his older sisters towards whom he reported warm feelings and on-going close relations. Thus we may speculate that this role for

José represents an attempt on his part to define a position for himself, modelled on his mother's role of devoted and persevering sacrifice. It would seem that this identification replaces an object tie to his mother so that, in effect, she disappears from the group, replaced by him. And his sisters or group siblings become the objects of his cautious attention, into whom he may project, then, his own feelings of neediness and vulnerability, at once distancing himself from those feelings, relieving his anxiety, and, at the same time, justifying his role and reinforcing his identification with his maternal object.

But because the sibling objects do not reciprocate with appropriate role demands confirming José's role definition, the role lacks substance. In the group, of course, the two female members were not prepared to look to José as a maternal surrogate, however much they may have welcomed his attention and concern. And in his family, we may speculate, that the youngest child was not a likely candidate for such a role even if the family situation tended to elicit it -- though there must have been something in the family situation that seemed to offer the possibility, at least, of such a role for José to have internalized it as he did.

By contrast, José's "out" role did seem to offer him a substantial function to perform by way of a defensive delineation. As we noted in Chapter Two, it became apparent

during José's absence in the group's fifth session that the group members had come to expect him to "seethe" on their behalf, to carry the resentments powerfully boiling within them aroused by the deprivation they experienced from the female consultant. His tendency to withdraw to a position "out" of the group, of course, made him particularly suitable for that function; but his identification with his father as a "proud, angry, frustrated" man prepared him to take it on. Correspondingly, in that role, José felt rejected by the group and uncared for. This state reflected the group under the control of women which, he felt, was a situation he had been subjected to, again and again, throughout his life. Towards the end of the group's second session he expressed his frustration at being "out," feeling exhausted: "I can't get close -- something I don't understand. I don't get messages I need to feel close...but I have to give the benefit of a doubt to people, have to keep trying because I think maybe it's me." His tendency at such points, he reported several times, was to retreat into what he called "autistic thinking," that is, reflecting by himself on his own experience and memories.

Paradoxically, however, though José felt rejected and isolated in this "out" position -- driven to the verge of what felt to him like a form of autism -- it was in this role that he was most connected to the group, most "accepted" by the

members as the bearer of their projected resentments. Moreover, in this "out" role José was able to feel closer to his father through his identification with him, not only his personal qualities (pride, anger, etc.) but also his position as an outsider in the family group.

Yet this position, too, was unsatisfactory and unstable, leading José to abandon it again and again in an effort to get back "in." We can only imagine that what drove him back to the group so insistently was his wish for the maternal object within it, the object that must have seemed to him able to offer a more reliable closeness than his frequently absent father because of her devoted and sacrificial presence. But, at the same time, he dreaded it and had to defend himself against it through his identification with it, denial of its presence, and efforts to convert it into a hostile or unhelpful object.

The hypothesis that, I think, best accounts for this pattern is José's dread of the destructive power of his own attraction to the maternal object, his own insatiable hunger for it. Guntrip (1952) has described the terrifying and desperate predicament of the child with such a fantasy of his love's destructive potential and how it leads to what he refers to as an "in and out program" of attraction to and retreat from the desired object. José's pattern of "in" and "out" roles, I think, springs from essentially the same dilemma.

Drawn by the overwhelming power of his attraction to the maternal object, and wishing to believe in its ability to withstand his desire for it, José approaches the group. His correspondingly powerful anxiety, however, causes him to attempt to blot out the dangerous source of his attraction. He projects his destructive fantasies into her, attempting to reverse the situation he actually fears and, so, keep himself at a safe distance. He also adopts, defensively, an identification with her that also helps to remove her presence as an object. (It may also be that this identification includes the concept of the father as an object of attraction and, so, in a sense inaugurates the idea of a less powerful and therefore less threatening substitute object, from whom it is safe to desire closeness and affection.)

Thus "in" the group, José attempts to create a defensive role for himself as a mother surrogate but one, as we saw, that is not agreed to or joined by the others. Sacrificially, he tries and tries, but fails to get the "messages" he needs to confirm his wished for identity. As a result he is driven "out," into a role that is desired by the group and which permits him to give vent to his frustration and seek for a substitute and more tolerable closeness through his identification with his father. That appears to be a more effective role in the group and for him, except for the fact of his mounting sense of deprivation and isolation from the desired

maternal object which leads him to withdraw into a fantasy of almost autistic self-sufficiency. That, in turn, drives him to seek out his object once again "in" the group -- and thus the pattern of oscillation repeats itself.

In this way, José's specific defensive needs with respect to his fantasied destructive desire for the maternal object meshed with the defensive needs of the family system: to cope with the deprivations, frustrations, and conflicts that arose around an overburdened but sacrificial mother and a frequently absent father who might be expected to be blamed for the family's unmet needs. José could serve as a scapegoat for his father, to the extent that he took on his "out" role, and, perhaps through his identification with him, hope to earn the love and attention from him that he felt obliged to renounce from his maternal object. Thus he served his family, assumed an identity of sorts, but at cost of a stable position within the family and the opportunity to work through his conflicts regarding his primary maternal object.

As a result, José's life was fraught with conflict and tension. Oscillating between positions, neither of which could satisfy his needs and defend him against his anxieties to any tolerable degree, he was unable to internalize a role definition for himself in his family that he could draw upon in subsequent group settings. He felt that no matter how hard he tried -- and his experience was that he tried again

and again -- he could never belong to a group. And the truth of that was that he had no group role that satisfied his needs in any reliable way.

III. Variations Among Archaic Role Definitions

The case material of the group members just reviewed amply confirms the general concepts of regression and defense developed in the preceding chapters. The members entering the group are subject to a regressive process that weakens the mature identity system in so far as it has developed within the individual and, with it, the individual's highest level of defenses and defensive strategies. There is a corresponding reduction of the object world to the essential pattern acquired in the early family group that now serves his new defensive needs as that essential pattern had served his defensive needs in his family of origin.

Now, it is possible to look at these new self and object world configurations more closely in order to discriminate the kinds of patterns that do emerge for individuals in terms of developmental stages and, moreover, to explore the relation between the mature identity system that is weakened in the group regression and the archaic role definition that takes its place or, rather, that re-emerges out of the more complex and highly integrated identity system.

In looking at the case material with these questions in mind we will be trying to find the common features of this process so that it will become possible to build a greater understanding not only of how the archaic role identity in the family contributes to the more mature identity system but also how this interaction between the archaic role

definition and the identity system influences subsequent work role behavior and the ability of individuals to take on and adapt to a variety of work roles, as he is usually required to do in adult life. Our case material does not provide a very rich source for speculation on these latter questions about mature work role behavior; as a result these questions will be explored in a final chapter with other more highly speculative issues that this enquiry raises but does not have sufficient data to resolve in a more satisfactory way. This is not to imply that the question of the interaction between the identity system and the archaic role definition can be dealt with here in a fully satisfactory manner. This, too, is speculative, based on the study of only five cases, each one of which voluntarily chose to participate in a therapy group because clearly, each one was unhappy with his ability to conduct his life as he wished. But, with that in mind, we may also bear in mind that each member of the group was working in a demanding professional setting or was completing a course of graduate study leading to a professional career. Thus the specific patterns and kinds of problems they exhibit are probably fairly typical of ones likely to be encountered in an average group of well educated adults.

If we look at the case material with a view to comparing the depth of the regressive process -- that is, in terms of

the relative primitiveness of the object world evoked for each member in the group setting -- we can begin to make some distinctions. In Kernberg's (1976) view of developing object relations, following Jacobson (1964) and Mahler (1968), the earliest organization of the self and object world is by affective coloration, self and object representations are clustered according to whether the associated affects are "good" or "bad." That, then, gradually gives way, as ego functions mature, to an organization in terms of self-object differentiation, leading to the establishment of object constancy and the beginnings of a self-image in which the "good" and "bad" representations are brought together. To look at this from the perspective of regression, merger with the object can be viewed as less regressive than the splitting of the object into its "good" and "bad" components when that splitting is accompanied by the activation of corresponding self representations linked with each "good" and "bad" object.

In the case of Bruce, his usual object world consisted of an ambivalent maternal object (with particularly strong anaclitic tendencies) and a weaker paternal object with whom he had a strong rivalry and identification; under the sway of the group regressive process he seemed to evoke a rather primitive, amorphous object that consisted of only semi-differentiated parts. That is, the powerful maternal object appears to have reabsorbed the separate objects of Bruce's

world, including Bruce's self, under the sway of his powerful wish for merger. But, as we saw, that wish was counteracted by an opposing anxiety about control; Bruce evoked the stubborn, withholding strategies derived from his anal stage relationship with the maternal object to stem the process of merger and establish a relatively stable relationship with it of semi-differentiation. The wish for control counter-balanced the wish for merger, and this state was confirmed, in effect, by the maternal object's willingness, as Bruce experienced it, to seek him out, i.e. to accept his withdrawal but also continue to proffer nurturance. Additional stability to this object arrangement was provided by the paternal object, also only semi-differentiated in a manner comparable to Bruce's self, but sufficiently so to serve as a repository for Bruce's feelings of helplessness to which he could then respond with contempt.

Louise's object world in the group, by way of contrast, seems to correspond to a somewhat earlier developmental stage. As we saw, the maternal object was split sharply and each split off part was linked with additional objects and self-definitions in rather clear configurations: the "good" maternal object, activated in the group setting, with its corresponding demanding, ungrateful sibling objects and Louise in the role of the one blaming and receiving blame from them. The "bad" maternal object, kept outside the

group, was linked with her child and paternal "victims" that Louise took on the task of helping. This world of split objects is clearly preambivalent, developmentally early. Moreover, her experience in the group was more troubling to her, fraught with more conflict and confusion than Bruce's experience. And the kinds of problems she encountered in her work life outside the group seem to have been more severe than those Bruce reported.

I do not wish to pretend to be able to discriminate finely levels of pathology among group members. The point is simply that in examining the kind of object world that appears to become activated in group members in relation to their archaic role definitions, it does appear to be significant for their sense of comfort or effectiveness in the group what developmental level of object relations they fall back upon and evoke. Carmen's primary tie in the group seems to have been to an ambivalent maternal object that she experienced as "powerful" -- able, that is, to give and to withhold. Thus her object world appears, developmentally, the most advanced of those subject to the group's regressive process. (That may be, however, a function of Carmen's detachment, a guardedness that did not permit her fully to experience her regressively aroused wishes; holding on to her higher order defenses, keeping aloof and observing the group, in a sense, she did not fully join it, much as she must have

carefully controlled herself also in her family of origin.)

Arthur, on the other hand, evidenced an object world in the group that just stopped short of manifesting for him the presence of a dread maternal object: his self was merged with and dispersed among the semi-differentiated parts of the amorphous group object. We speculated that he actively promoted this state for himself out of his defensive need to avoid a confrontation with the "bad" object -- that further regression might evoke for him -- with its corresponding role demand to become a fight leader. Thus he avoided the deeper regression that would have dissolved, as it were, the group to which he could belong and confronted him with the "bad" object along with the linked self-image evoking an almost intolerable anxiety. He escaped into the group and from a role that may well have been all too familiar in his family but not tolerable to him -- or, at least, far less so than the somewhat higher level of object relations he more habitually regressed to in the group.

These examples suggest that the archaic role definition represents the earliest successful defensive configuration of the self and object world available to the ego -- one discovered early in one's developmental history, we may speculate, and resorted to again and again through various regressive-defensive maneuvers in response to particular intra- and inter-psychic pressures aroused within one's early

family group. Thus it becomes a kind of base, as it were, to which the ego, driven by anxiety, can retreat with some security -- though, of course, not without the sacrifice of some degree of higher order functioning. It is probably not the first organization of the self and object world developed by the child, but the first one that has a degree of stability and reliability in terms of the child's defensive needs established through successive adjustments and efforts in the family group. We may say, then, that the archaic role definition represents the child's most basic sense of who he is in his world that is consistent with his defensive needs and the specific opportunities for recognition and relationship available within his family.

This need on the part of the individual for such a stable and effective organization of the self and object world in his family corresponds to the defensive needs of group members to stem the anxiety aroused in them by the regressive process. Thus, we can more easily see now how it is that the individual group members faced with their anxiety in the unstructured group fall back upon the archaic role definitions they carry around within themselves and attempt to activate them in the group, finding individuals who will function appropriately enough for them to do so, who correspond to the family members who served as the prototypes for the internalized objects, and finding ways of interacting with

them that will sufficiently correspond to their internalized self-perceptions.

That stability of organization of the object world, however, does appear to vary according to the level of regression. Not all group members evidence equally stable or effective archaic role definitions by any means. If the archaic role definition that is evoked by the regressive process stems from the pre-ambivalent stage of "good" and "bad" objects -- as in the case of Louise -- it appears likely to produce some disorientation and confusion, and to lay the person attempting to assume such a role open to exploitation by the group, as well, as group members search around for objects willing to receive their pre-ambivalent "bad" projections.

The clearest example of this, of course, is provided by José and the "in" and "out" oscillation of his alternating group roles. "In" the group, in the quasi-maternal role of attempting to provide for the needs of others, he approached a sense of personal effectiveness but one that was not responded to and, thus, confirmed by others. "Out" of the group, he served as an effective bearer of the group's resentment, but at the cost of any personal sense of connectedness to group members. This lack of a sense of personal effectiveness and, of course, of stability as well made the group experience particularly painful and baffling to him -- and it

appears to correspond precisely to the difficulty he experienced in finding a secure and tolerable place for himself in his family of origin. It seems, rather, as if he was used by his family for stabilizing its defensive needs as a whole -- as he was used by the group -- and was himself unable to use the family (and subsequently the group) to establish a consistent and reliable way of being for himself. (This is not meant to slight the impact of constitutional factors in these dynamic patterns, but to highlight the impact of the group in exacerbating or minimizing such factors and, hence, the extent to which children in families as well as individuals in groups are helped or hindered by their group relatedness.)

The result for José of not having been able to internalize in his family an effective and stable archaic role definition was that his subsequent experience in his family group as well as in the organizations and institutions in which he trained and worked was subject to extremely painful confusion and disorientation. And, indeed, knowing that but not able to understand why, he tended to avoid group life as much as possible and to approach it, when necessary, with dread.

Louise, as we have seen, possessed an archaic role definition that split, as it were, into two separable components, each one in relation to a "good" and "bad" maternal object. Unlike José, Louise was propelled into group life by her need to activate her archaic role definitions and the gratifications

she hoped to gain from them, gratifications unavailable to José. But, like José to some (though a lesser) extent, she too ended up with the experience of being confused as a result of her group role. Unconsciously protecting the "good" mother by provoking her sibling objects and, thus, eliciting their blame, she ended up being unable to account for what happened to her in the group, which was particularly painful in the light of her conscious identity that also included being a particularly caring, empathic and devoted person. As we saw, those caring and "good" parts of her identity system were activated more fully in the archaic role definition that related to the "bad" mother and her "victims" but they were also present in the complete but poorly integrated identity system that she found herself having to abandon in the group at the price of considerable pain and confusion.

These two examples suggest that the whole question of the effectiveness and stability of the archaic role definition has to be understood in terms of its relation to the mature identity system: to what extent is the archaic role definition continuous with and capable of being integrated into the mature identity system the person possesses before and after his group experiences and carries with him into the group, at least in part, as an aspect of his self-image. For Louise the experience of the group was baffling, though as we have

seen it was baffling in ways that were not unfamiliar to her or intolerable. But to the extent that her group role disoriented her and led to results she did not understand as a function of her behavior, she was unable to work effectively in the group setting in promoting her conscious goals and she experienced personal distress. For José, the situation was far worse because, in a sense, his group roles were experienced entirely as something that happened to him, something, that is, he could not grasp in relation to his own actions. As it had happened often enough he had come to give others, as he put it, "the benefit of a doubt" -- but that was without being able to understand his pattern of group roles as having any relation to his mature identity system, his highest level of understanding of himself, his world, and the relations between them. In the group, he expected to suffer, as if entering a world without any logic or justice to which he could appeal.

Bruce, on the other hand, seems to provide the clearest example of consistency and continuity between his archaic role definition and identity system. As the precious child, appreciated by his maternal object, he is able to feel that he continues to be valued and sought after even in hiding. He does not undergo the shift and bewilderment of Louise, in this respect, or José.

In Carmen's case, too, we can see an essential consistency in her role definiton and identity system but also one that is

maintained at something of a price. As "mediator" and maternal surrogate, she sees herself usually helping others. But the group experience activates in her a sense of her own impoverishment that, at the very least, saps her willingness to give and, more profoundly, her potential sense that, not having received enough, she may indeed have little of value to give. Thus by standing on the periphery of the group -- as she did in her family -- she keeps herself from experiencing that hunger. But in continuing to maintain that position and, with it that archaic role definition, she restricts the potential enriched development of her identity system. A part of herself has to be continually disclaimed.

For Bruce, though to a lesser extent, the relative ease of transition from his identity system to the archaic role definition points to a restriction in his identity system that turned out to be of particular concern to him. Reflecting on his tendency to assume a withdrawn, seductive pose, he expressed the dissatisfaction he felt with what seemed like an inability to be more direct and assertive in his relationships with others. And, indeed, his attraction to and preoccupation with his powerful maternal object -- which formed the centerpiece, as it were, of his object world -- did tend to restrict the range of his interactions with others. Arthur, too, in his group role sacrificed initiatives that might otherwise have been available to him were he less needful of hiding

in the group in the ostensible service of an identity promoting unity and concern for others.

It should come as no surprise at this point in these reflections, then, that role is more restrictive than identity. There may be baffling and seemingly incongruous aspects to one's group experience that do not seem to fit with who one feels oneself to be; José and Louise reveal this, but also Arthur in identifying his typical family role of leader. Or there may be a smoother and more integrated fit between the two. But the movement developmentally forward from the archaic role definition to the mature identity system is demanding and complex, involving the acknowledgement and integration of progressively greater portions of the self and the world. Correspondingly, as we have seen, the regressive movement backwards, activated in group settings, poses comparable questions for the individual regarding the consistency and reliability of his self image, understanding of others, and sense of relationship between the two: how much sense that he usually expects to make of his experience in the world applies to the more restrictive realm of group life, defined as it is by the agreements members work out based on their archaic role definitions. Our examples suggest that if the correspondence between the two is too discrepant, as with José and Louise, then the group experience tends to be painful and disorienting. On the other hand, if it is too congruant, as

with Carmen, it may suggest a too restrictive identity system for the individual or a considerable degree of inhibition in being able to enter group life, a sense of constriction that is an on-going legacy of one's early family life.

The essential point, I think, is that there is no ideal resolution to these developmental problems, though there may well be particularly difficult hurdles for individuals to surmount by virtue of specific family group dynamics to which they had to adjust in forming their archaic role definitions. It stands to reason that as the earliest and most primitive organization of the self and object worlds gives way to progressively more complex and flexible organizations, allowing for the developing individual to incorporate into his sense of reality as relatively stable and reliable features more and diverse aspects of himself and others, he will have to undergo conflicts, set-backs, and periods of confusion. Our discussion of the experience of José, Louise, Carmen, Bruce, and Arthur reveals that -- along with, of course, the corresponding reluctance or difficulty experienced by them in making those adjustments.

This exploration, then, does not permit us to chart the course of development with any greater precision, but it does allow us to look at the phenomena of roles in groups with more understanding of the particular dilemmas individuals confront. In a sense, it attempts to map a broad territory within which each person has the opportunity to find his own bearings.

CHAPTER FOUR:

IMPLICATIONS

I. Introduction

The concept of the archaic role definition as a core element in the identity system -- an early, and relatively stable synthesis of self and object images -- carries implications for the continuing developmental process of the individual throughout adulthood as well as for the individual's ability to enter into work role relations in institutional and organizational settings.

As our case material amply demonstrates, the regressive-adaptive process by means of which individuals attempt to fit themselves into groups often deprives them of their most mature level of identity and capacity for flexible, reflective thinking and acting. Thus they often lose much of the competence that they -- as well as the institutions within which they work -- require for effective task performance. How does the concept of the archaic role definition shed light on this dilemma?

Moreover, recent years have shown a great deal of interest in adult development. Erikson's (1956) effort to map out the human life cycle in terms of epigenetic stages has been followed, most notably, by the work of Vaillant (1977) and Levinson (1978). If development is seen as a life-long process involving progressive reorganizations of the self, how is that process affected by the archaic role definition? What light can be shed on the dilemmas posed for the individual's

multi-phase developmental tasks by the concept of the archaic role definition?

These questions cannot be addressed here in any comprehensive or, even, I think, satisfactory way. But I think that it would be useful to raise them and develop certain implications that might be followed up on other occasions.

II. Work Roles and Identity

At the beginning of Chapter Two, Bion's concept of the "work group" was referred to as a means of understanding how groups defend themselves against the regressive process and, with it, the activation of the "basic assumption group." That is, by the group's capacity to remind itself of the task it has come into existence to perform and which links it to the on-going realities outside the group, members are able to hold on to their identities outside the group. Their focus becomes less the need to adapt to the group entity, a process that invokes regression and primitive defenses against regression and the loss of mature identities.

Jacques (1955) and Menzies (1967) as we saw in that discussion developed out of this concept a view of organizational life that emphasized the need for institutions to provide not only a clear emphasis on task and task performance but also to respond to the inevitable defensive needs of individuals within organizations when complex and overlapping tasks become confusing, when contradictory demands are placed on an individual, when task performance itself becomes stressful or problematic -- when, in short, the individual's competence is threatened and his increasing anxiety forces him to attempt to adapt to the organization in the regressed ways we have been characterizing. In a sense they have elaborated not only Bion's distinction between the work group and the

basic assumption group but also upon his point that they never exist in pure form, one without the other. That is, one is always both defending against the anxieties of group membership and attempting to perform a task; what is significant is the proportion of each and their interactions.

From the organizational perspective, Miller and Rice (1967) conceptualized this as overlapping systems as we saw in our review of his concept of role in the Introduction: the task system is devoted to the conversion process of materials whose "export" is essential to the survival of the organization; the sentient system is comprised of the individuals who perform the work of the institution but who also interact in other ways out of their human needs as persons in work roles. In his application of this systems view to the individual himself, Rice (1969) saw the ego or management function as drawing upon the resources of the person to integrate as fully as possible these two overlapping sets of demands.

It follows that the individual who assumes a work role in an organization can never expect to be able to focus on his work task to the exclusion of his defensive needs, that in short he must expect to be thrown back upon his archaic role definition at times. And it is thus necessarily the case that the question of the degree of the congruence of the archaic role definition with his mature identity system and

with the particular role demands of a given job is of importance to his ability to function effectively in the organization.

This is too complex a matter to be thoroughly or clearly mapped out, and, certainly, it would be grossly oversimplifying the factors involved to attempt to produce a formula by means of which "success" or "failure" in group work could be linked with specific attributes of archaic role definitions. One has only to bear in mind the variety and subtlety of work role definitions that exist in organizational life and, with that, the almost infinitely varied stresses and demands likely to be encountered in work role performance. Still, it is possible, I believe, to make some observations about some specific dilemmas of work life in groups that spring from the "fit" between the archaic role definition, the mature identity system, and the work role.

As we saw, most notably in the case of José but also Louise, a split in the archaic role definition is an on-going source of confusion for the person in a group. Not only is the person deprived to some extent of a consistent and reliable sense of self (Louise viewed herself, half humorously, as "crazy") but also the group appears to have a baffling, inconsistent quality that undermines the judgement of the person seeking to interact with its members (José felt he had to keep giving members the "benefit of a doubt"). By contrast,

for someone like Bruce both the group and the self had relatively clear and consistent outlines. Bruce could sit back and wait for "the group to form around me" as he expressed his preferred strategy in the opening session because it always did form around him in the same way. That is, the inner objects activated by the group experience tended to function in predictable and reliable ways so that, with some degree of comfort, he could wait to identify their external manifestations among the group members.

The degree to which his archaic role definition is congruent with a given work role definition, of course, will vary greatly. Thus, for example, one could imagine Bruce playing a vital part in any group activity based upon the basic assumption of dependency. In a religious or educational setting he would be likely to feel comfortable and to work easily in promoting the unconscious search of the group for a maternal figure, attempting to find for himself a prominent supportive role. By contrast, it would be hard to imagine him fitting into a fight role so easily -- though one in which he could fight on behalf of (and receive recognition from) a powerful maternal figure might be more welcome. These are crude distinctions, and one might easily go on to look at specific work roles in specific institutions with a view to seeing how they would provide opportunities for specific individuals to activate specific archaic role definitions -- and thus bring

to bear deep resources of energy and wishes on their work tasks.

It is equally important to bear in mind, however, that there are dangers in the capacity of groups to exploit the specific unconscious capacities of individual members. Thus group members may be encouraged to act upon their archaic role definitions unreflectingly, meshing their unconscious wishes and defenses with that of the group so that the group and the individual become virtually locked, as it were, in a view of themselves and the world that is unreal, unworkable, and potentially destructive.

Pathological leadership is, of course, one form this can take. Kennberg (1978, 1979) has written specifically of the "talent" narcissistic personalities exhibit in large groups. On the one hand they tend to be more immune to the disorientation and dedifferentiation of the regressive process activated in groups because of the inherent tenuousness and/or flexibility of their usual relationships with others; the shallow, undeveloped quality of their object relations accounts for their easy transition into regressive settings. In addition, they thrive on the mercurial shifts of moods and opportunities to crystalize emergent ideas in slogans to gain attention and reflected glory. Such characters possess these talents by virtue of the nature of their object worlds. That is, in the terms we have been developing, they have archaic

role definitions that organize relatively undeveloped and primitive objects and self images, often part objects that easily shift in their attachments to real persons. On the other hand, they have powerful needs to be recognized and responded to so that they are driven to manipulate the unconscious impulses and anxieties of the group to manifest at least the appearance of the kind of objects that gratify those needs.

This condition is more likely to develop in large groups, particularly in unorganized crowds where it would be difficult, under the best of circumstances, to establish consistent object ties to individuals. In a sense, thus, crowds provide something of an advantage to such character organizations because an individual with a more highly stable and differentiated object world is, first of all, more likely to be confused and disorganized by the loss of his natural identity system face to face with the fragmented and fleeting human objects encountered in crowds and, secondly, less likely to know how to put those fragments together into objects that can appear to meet their needs.

> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity --

as Yeats put it in his vision of a world increasingly dominated by faceless mobs.

In small groups, such as the task-oriented sub-groupings one is more likely to encounter within established

organizations, this is less likely to be the case. Such groups not only provide a continuing emphasis on task and, hence, the appropriate work role definitions that can be integrated into identity systems, but also the kind of face to face contacts that facilitate the attachment of inner objects to whole persons. In that kind of setting, the mercurial attachments characteristic of personalities with less developed object worlds are more likely to be recognized and, also, more likely to disappoint the expectations of others in the group looking to have more consistent persons to whom they can attach their inner objects so they can activate their identity systems, even if only the core element that may be available to them in the archaic role definition.

Even so, small groups do not wholly lack the dangers to individuals of having their archaic role definitions exploited in the service of the group's defensive strategy, even when the task is clear and work roles are sharply articulated. The danger is less of pathological leadership than of scapegoating, that is of becoming a group member who with more or less intensity and awareness takes on the task of receiving the hostile or negative projections of the group. Idealization is, of course, the other side of this coin, but I think we can focus on scapegoating because it is almost always the case that when a group idealizes a member (which is to say

when it uses a member as a receptacle for its positive wishes) it is also splitting off hostile, threatening impulses that must be safely located elsewhere. And it is the loading onto the scapegoat of these negative projections that is most often the more destructive aspect of the process to the individual as well as to the group.

Louise and José provided two clear examples of such a process: Louise is agreeing to become the "bad" mother who blames and receives the blame and resentment that might otherwise be directed at the "good" mother; José who bears the group's seething rage and takes it outside, sparing the "good" mother, or directing it at her while the group observes, seemingly as innocent bystanders. These scapegoating roles provided much of the preoccupation and drama of the group because the problem posed to the group by its deprivation and rage was so pronounced. The availability of Louise and José for these roles thus helped the other group members to dissociate significant aspects of their total experience while consciously remaining aloof from persons they perceived as being dangerous or unfriendly. At the same time, these roles were particularly painful to José and Louise as they seriously interfered with their ability to join with the group in its work task and also, of course, reinforced their negative self-esteem. For them, in short, the role served a masochistic function.

It is no accident that we have come back to the examples of José and Louise at this point. Earlier in this section we saw the difficulty posed to them by their split archaic role definitions: they often were prone to feeling "crazy" or unsure of what was going on in others, i.e. the complementary role definitions they could attribute to others. Now, however, we have been focusing on their scapegoating function. The two are related because it is precisely the fact that they, like all the other group members, needed to find a way of fitting into the group and had available to them the negative archaic role definition that so easily met one of the group's overwhelmingly powerful defensive needs that they found so quickly the scapegoated roles and experienced such difficulty in extricating themselves from them. I think that we can take this one step further and see that in the group each recapitulated a process that unfolded originally in their families of origin and that, thus, there has been a fairly consistent relationship throughout their developmental histories between their split archaic role definitions and the tendency to occupy essentially masochistic roles.

In the case of Louise, the split in the archaic role definition reflects a split in the maternal object. For José, the situation appears to have been more complex: "in" the group he attempts to activate an identification with his mother as a caring, protective self and, in so doing, obliterate his

need for her; "out" he identifies with his proud, angry father. "In" or "out", however, his archaic role definition serves a primary function of defending himself against his feared (probably destructive) relationship with his maternal object. The point is that for both, at some early developmental stage, a split developed in their archaic role definitions, a split that organized their object ties, identifications, projective identification, and delineations in two opposing and unintegrated ways and that the continuation of that split on into their mature identity systems perpetuated a particular vulnerability to being exploited in their families and subsequent groups. Because of the split, the object world takes on an unpredictable, uncertain quality which, in turn, intensifies their need to establish contact with it, even if it is the contact of a negative, self-defeating and self-deprecating role.

Thus we can say that in approaching group life there is some considerable advantage to possessing an archaic role definition that is not split. It is probably a matter of degree. That is, the archaic role definition by virtue of its simplicity must leave out considerable elements of the child's experience: only some self and object representations can be included in it. Those that are included thrive because of the importance they assume in mapping out the child's relatedness to the object world. Those that are not included assume a far lesser importance -- at least for a time. These unintegrated

aspects of the self and object world undergo a variety of vicissitudes, often including repression if they are particularly threatening. They may even undergo degrees of organization and integration on their own. But it is only if they are organized into an alternative role definition and one that compensates for some particular inadequacy in the primary archaic role definition that we can say the archaic role definition has a split in it, one that will be for the person a continuing source of uncertainty and vulnerability in his on-going group life.

To summarize, that vulnerability manifests itself in two ways for the person: as a greater need to make contact with the group (or to avoid it) because of their greater uncertainty about what the group is going to mean for them, and as a greater willingness to offer their negative role definitions for exploitation. With this in mind it is easier now to understand José's initial heroic role in the group and Louise's reticence. José plunged in to make a place for himself -- i.e. to define himself in his relation to others -- because, in part, he lacked the confidence that he knew there would be a place, and he ended up assuming the place the group made available for him and which he knew only too well, that of an angry outsider. Louise, who usually plunges in, tried to avoid that, hoping that this group would be a new beginning for her, but she too ended up by becoming integrated in an old

familiar role.

Once again, the crucial point appears to be the level of development at which the archaic role definition is formed -- more accurately, firmed into shape by the person's repeated exposure to family life -- and its corresponding degree of integration and capacity for synthesis. In joining new groups and assuming work role definitions this is important in order for the individual to avoid a predisposition to failure and for the group to avoid concentrating its activity on counter-productive defensive maneuvers that are too easily available.

In the on-going development of the individual, the capacity of the archaic role definition to synthesize and integrate new aspects of the self and the object world is crucial -- and this now places us in the position to make a final point about the concept of role originally raised in the Introduction. A number of writers referred to there seem to follow the theoretical position of Mead (1934) in seeing the self as composed of the sum total of social roles assumed by the individual. Thus role is seen as a kind of building block or component -- a view that speaks to common sense in so far as it expresses the idea that self is a more inclusive concept than role. The early writers on roles in the families of schizophrenics (see, for example, Brody, 1959) often express this view, as if the roles thrust on schizophrenic children were component pieces of identity that could

somehow be pried loose and discarded. Rice (1969) also seems to view role this way, when he speaks of the multiplicity of divergent roles an individual is capable of assuming, reorganizing components of his ego in the process.

It should be quite clear at this point that role, if it has any relationship to identity at all, can not be so easily added or discarded. We have been viewing the archaic role definition as a core element in the identity system and coming increasingly to view its capacity for synthesizing and integrating new objects and experience as vital to the functioning of the person. Perhaps it is possible to imagine a person taking on a role temporarily and provisionally for which he has no taste and little talent, but, by and large, this must be a rare event, all the more so because such an experience would have little to offer the person who took it on. For the most part, the roles assumed by persons -- whether in such unstructured groups as described here or in more specifically focused work groups within organizations -- inevitably draw upon core elements of the person's identity, both because of the defensive security provided by the stable presence of those core elements and because the opportunities for new experience and learning occur within the framework of the possibilities they permit. We may perhaps speak of roles as added on to the self but, if so, it must be borne in mind that such an addition is always to a central core and inclusive

of it.

Correspondingly, it would not be possible to speak of a role definition in terms of degree, as being more or less present for the person who occupies it. Either it is -- or it isn't. That is, the appearances of a role may be more or less obscure, its signs difficult or easy to read. We may not be certain -- or only partially certain -- that a person is occupying a role. His position in an organization or family may be ambiguous, contradictory, concealed. He himself may not know. But if he possesses a role definition at all, it is anchored in the archaic role definition at the core of his identity system.

"Anchor," "base," "core" -- these are all metaphors to express the sense of rootedness of the self in the archaic role definition. But perhaps "rooted" is the preferable metaphor in some ways because it implies the process of organic growth, as rings of a tree trunk mark the stages of its ever more inclusive self.

Perhaps we can summarize this discussion best by identifying three parameters that characterize the archaic role definition. First and most obvious is the number of objects it includes in addition to the self. For an only child, such as Bruce, this is likely to be only two parental objects. For the only child of a single parent, conceivably, this could be one parental object, whereas it may include

upwards of four objects in addition to the self for individuals in family settings where grandparents and/or siblings have been clearly differentiated. Further observations and investigations are needed, however, to clarify what is essentially an empirical question.

A second parameter is the level of development at which the archaic role definition has been formed -- more precisely, the level of object differentiation and synthesis that is incorporated into the role definition. That is, the archaic role definition may incorporate ambivalent objects or even more fully synthesized objects such as appear to characterize Carmen's object world. On the other hand, as we have seen in the examples of José and Louise, it may include pre-ambivalent objects, in which case there is the risk of a split archaic role definition with the attendant problems for a stable identity discussed above.

This touches on the third parameter: the capacity of the archaic role definition to synthesize or to be integrated into progressively more advanced aspects of the self and the object world, to function as a core element of identity rather than as a rigidly limiting factor with a more purely defensive function. At this point, it is impossible to describe with any precision how this synthesizing occurs or to discriminate archaic role definitions that have more of this capacity for resynthesis from those

that do not. But, clearly, this is of significance for the question of adaptation to changing work roles and, even more so, the question of the relationship between the archaic role definition and changes in identity required by post-childhood development, the question to be taken up in the following section.

III. Later Development and the Archaic Role Definition

It is well beyond the scope of this study to attempt a clarification or synthesis of various conceptions of adolescent and adult development. But in light of the fact that the study of developmental stages in youth and adulthood invariably focuses on the question of identity -- influenced, to be sure, by changes in instinctual energy as well as social norms regarding work, parent and grand-parent roles -- it would not be amiss here to offer some thoughts on the relationship between the archaic role definition and subsequent modifications or alterations in the identity system. This is particularly worth doing here, I think, because the question of the archaic role definition's capacity for synthesizing new experiences and integrating divergent self and object representations has come to seem of such importance to the on-going consistent and effective functioning of the individual. To simplify the task, however, I would like to touch on only two periods of post-childhood development: adolescence and what has come to be called the "mid-life transition" (Levinson, 1978).

For Erikson (1959), adolescence is the crucial stage in identity formation or its potential pathological outcome, identity diffusion. In his view, earlier development culminates in "a sense of ego identity," which he defines as "the accrued confidence that one's ability to maintain inner

sameness and continuity (one's ego in the psychological sense) is matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others." (p. 89) Here the focus is on the developing child's growing awareness of the models and norms available to him in the adult world that allow him to see that he belongs or can belong to it and not be an idiosyncratic or deviant isolate. Erikson's highly generalized description is consistent with the view of the archaic role definition we have been developing because, of course, it is the family that first offers the child a consistent view of others and the opportunity and challenge of fitting himself into the world they compose. The crucial point is that in adolescence, the task of identity formation causes the child to reach out beyond these early objects and to go beyond the method of identification. He now begins to require more urgently than before the direct experience of new relationships with others in order to reshape his sense of who he is in accordance with his newly strengthened libinal impulses and increased bodily awareness of himself as growing into adulthood.

Erikson's formulation thus rightly stresses the importance of new relationships and group associations as the setting within which stresses are applied to the "sense of identity" and also opportunities provided for expansion and re-synthesis. At the same time, by emphasizing the importance of the cultural scene he neglects to some extent the processes by which this

new synthesis takes place within the adolescent.

Jacobson (1964) has attempted to be far more precise in describing the "remodeling and growth of the psychic structures" in this period. For her, this is the time when optimally the ego expands to allow, on the one hand, for increased expression of libinal impulses (with a corresponding decrease in repression) and, on the other, the expansion of the ego ideal into the self image in the ego as well as other modifications in the super ego consistent with the development and testing out of new ideals.

But while Jacobson stresses the reorganization of psychic structures, she also accounts for corresponding alterations in the self and object world, as is to be expected from the prominence she gives to structural (ego) identifications: "probably the most incisive and difficult step is the gradual establishment of enduring new identifications with the parents as sexually active persons, who will ultimately grant him, too, the right to engage in sexual and other adult activities." (p. 175) She goes on to stress that this interacts with a simultaneous process of alteration in the self-image: "the adolescent's rapid growth and change necessitates continuous readjustments in his self representations" (p. 180). Thus she accounts for the rapid shifts and storms of adolescence as old structures are precariously dismantled and rebuilt and as the self and object worlds are redefined.

But the central element of this process is the continuity of object choice first pointed out by Freud (1905): "A child's affection for his parents is no doubt the most important infantile trace which, after being received at puberty, points to his choice of an object." (SE. 7, 228) And again: "There can be no doubt that every object-choice whatever is based...on these prototypes." (p. 228) What is required thus at this stage is a displacement onto a new and appropriate person of the tie to the inner object. At the same time, as Jacobson points out, the attachments to the parental figures must undergo change so that they now also become available for new identifications that assist the development into adulthood -- though continuing to bear an affinity to the inner objects of which they were the original prototypes.

I think one can understand this complex process more easily with the concept of the archaic role definition. Thus, to begin with, the evolution of the archaic role definition out of the original undifferentiated symbiotic object probably provides something of a model for this process. I have not attempted to describe that process in any detail or thoroughness within the narrower scope of this work. Nor is it a subject about which much appears to be known -- as is the case with the nature of inner objects themselves. But it is not hard to see that the inner object as well as the archaic

role definition is forged in the dawning consciousness of the developing child, pieced together out of early object representations, refined and tested by comparisons among persons in the environment who at times appear congruent with or joined to the object and at other times not. Related to this undoubtedly is the infant's developing capacity to discriminate the signs of those in his environment who are willing and able to serve as transference objects, grand-mothers, baby-sitters, and the like. And, of course, as the archaic role definition is more than object representations, it is just as important for the child in seeking out transference objects to be able to discriminate what the object expects of, sees in, and demands from the self who is seeking to establish a relationship with it. This is true for the child who is attempting to create his archaic role definition, and it is also true for the adolescent encountering the wider world outside the circle of his family.

Moreover, as Blos (1979) has pointed out, adolescent development optimally requires "regression in the service of development," which is to say the capacity to evoke with their primitive force the early objects of childhood in order to modify them in accordance with a matured cognitive function. And to do that, Blos has argued, it is important that the adolescent have the capacity to withstand the threat

of merger with his early objects evoked by the regressive process. I have suggested, correspondingly, that it is the archaic role definition, firmed into shape and stabilized by repeated regressive experiences in early childhood, that acts as a barrier to the threat of merger, offering the child (and, later, the adult) a relatively secure and reliable definition of the object world, the self, and the relationships between them to which he can regress instead. Indeed, it was a vital part of the argument developed in Chapter Two of this work that the archaic role definition acts as an effective barrier to the regressive process in groups and as defense against the anxiety of identity loss and with it the loss of structural identifications involved in higher level defenses. So in adolescence as well it may be the case that a secure and integrated archaic role definition assists regression, in a sense, by acting as a kind of control.

In any event, it does seem certain that adolescence with its multifaceted emphasis on group experience -- formal groupings such as teams and classes, informal groupings such as social cliques, clubs, parties, etc., not to mention the persistence of the family group and other families the adolescent enters -- serves as a vital stage in the establishment of the archaic role definition within the mature identity system. It is at this developmental point that the

constellation of self and object representations and their relationships composing the archaic role definition is for the first time detached from the original family setting and the real persons that gave rise to it initially and applied to the person's now considerably expanded world of group interactions. In this way, those original persons are freed, as it were, for the new identifications that Jacobson sees as so essential to the "remodelling" of psychic structures. In this way, too, the stage may be set for the regressive re-experience of these internal objects and the potential modification that Blos describes.

Nevertheless, it is important to maintain an emphasis on continuity, as Erikson does, in the process of identity formation; it is the on-going stability of the self and object worlds and the predictability of the relationship between them that constitutes identity. The adolescent thus not only relies on the continuity of his essential object choices in organizing his object world, as Freud pointed out, but also on the continuity of his self representation and role relations in maintaining a reliable sense of identity regardless of where he is outside his family of origin.

We can see, then, that adolescence is a period of stress for the archaic role definition and other psychic structures, the outcome of which is a greater degree of consistency and integration or, alternatively, the sharper

division of split role definitions, such as in the case of Louise, or the kind of identity diffusion Erikson has described. Indeed, it may well be the case that it is the crucial period of identity formation, as Erikson states, the period when a relatively loose and flexible organization of the psychic elements composing the archaic role definition is consolidated in a relatively definitive form, much as Blos speculates that the Oedipus complex is not resolved, even ideally, until adolescence.

It may be worth noting in passing the significance of the latency period (especially the early school years) in laying the foundation for this process -- though we can do no more here than point to an area that deserves considerably more attention. As the developmental stage in which the first stable peer group attachments are formed, latency is extremely important as the child's first extended contact with the world outside the family group. Thus, on the one hand, it is the child's first experience of adaptation to groups outside his family and, on the other, his first opportunity to apply the lessons learned in his family to the outside world, i.e. to transfer his archaic role definition to new settings. Indeed this experience may have a profound impact on determining the shape of the archaic role definition that later, in adolescence, is subjected to further stresses and modifications before being formed into

the relatively definitive shape it assumes preparatory to the person's first and most decisive ventures out into the world of adult groups.

The situation is quite different when we come to the "mid life crisis" or "mid life transition." Rather than preparing himself to enter the adult world, developing a firm and reliable sense of who he is and what he can expect and seek out from others, the person facing the latter half of his life requires a kind of renewal. Erikson (1959) refers to the sixth developmental stage as the conflict "generativity vs. stagnation," the developmental task being to find some way of contributing to succeeding generations -- whether through the raising of children or other forms of creativity -- or else facing the loss of one's own forward momentum and growth. In other words, as he sees the problem posed by this stage of life, either one brings a new set of objects into being, establishes a new orientation to one's existing objects, or faces a kind of psychological decay because one's existing self and object world cannot sustain mere continuation.

Subsequent writers have attempted to be more precise and specific in describing this developmental dilemma of adulthood. Jaques (1965) sees it as usually occurring in the mid or late '30s and being based on the perception of mortality. In his study of the lives of great artists and

creative thinkers, he distinguishes between the more spontaneous creations of early adulthood and the more studied and reflective productions that follow the crucial recognition that life will not continue to go on forever in the same way, that one has to face death and the restrictions it imposes on one's potential growth. From his perspective as a Kleinian, this involves a reworking through of the depressive position following the renewed perception, on the adult level, of the abandonment and loss entailed by one's death. "In so reworking through the depressive position, we unconsciously regain the primitive sense of wholeness -- of the goodness of ourselves and of our objects -- a goodness which is sufficient but not idealized, not subject to hollow perfection." This "reworking through" seems analogous to Erikson's view in that it involves a reorientation towards one's objects, a reaffirmation but with more depth and complexity of the essential continuity of one's self and object world. At the same time, Jaques lays stress on the need to find new external objects that can assist in this internal process.

Focusing primarily on artists, Jaques addresses only a narrow range of the adult population, but it is interesting nevertheless that in looking at the later productions of artists he discerns a new kind of "sculpted" creativity in their work. The artistic work, he theorizes, now becomes a

vehicle for projective identification and subsequent reinternalization; a dialogue of a sort ensues between the artist and his creation whereby the work in progress feeds back to its creator what he has projected into it, leading to progressive modifications, reprojections, and internalizations. In marked contrast to earlier, more spontaneous productions, these later works permit the reinternalization and assimilation of parts of the self that formerly were more completely and successfully externalized and disavowed. On a higher level and in a more conscious and reflective mode, Jaques seems to imply, it is a replay of the child's early relationship with the breast, not only reworking the anxiety of loss and abandonment ("re-working through the depressive position") to reaffirm the essential goodness of his objects, but also arriving at a more inclusive image of the self. The boundaries between self and object representations become redrawn, and the self becomes richer.

Levinson and his co-workers have attempted to describe an analogous process as generally true for all men passing through the "mid-life transition" in their 40's. As they see it, the typical adult male in setting about his career objectives, pursuing his "dream," through the 20's and 30's, has had to discard or neglect aspects of himself that are not specifically useful or relevant to the dream. By the time of the 40's, that dream is more clearly in focus as a reality,

which is to say that it has been achieved, usually only in part, and somewhat reconceived under the pressure of actual experience. That, then, forces a reexamination of one's life situation: "A man hears the voice of an identity prematurely rejected; of a love lost or not pursued; of a valued interest or relationship given up in acquiescence to parental or other authority; of an internal figure who wants to be an athlete or nomad or artist, to marry for love or remain a bachelor, to get rich or enter the clergy or live a sensual carefree life -- possibilities set aside earlier to become what he now is." (1978, p. 200) In a sense, the task of the mid life transition, as Levinson conceives it, is opposite though complementary to that of adolescence. Instead of focusing in on those aspects of himself that he is going to build upon and develop as he pursues his decided-upon goals, he now must seek out what he has earlier deemed non-essential; he must enrich his identity by reassimilating old self representations.

This necessarily involves a reorganization of the object world. In one way, of course, it is obvious that newly energized or activated components of identity seek out newly appropriate objects with which to interact. But Levinson, despite the fact that he avoids psychoanalytic concepts in his attempt to provide an account of this process, implies that a process of taking back earlier projections, that is of redrawing boundaries among self and object representations, is also a part of this reorganization.

He describes the mid-life transition as involving the reintegration of four fundamental polarities: Young/Old, Destruction/Creation, Masculine/Feminine, and Attachment/Separateness. These are based upon Jungian notions of archetypes, but a rough attempt can be made to link these with the object relations view of the archaic role definition we have been developing. Thus the Attachment/Separation polarity, which Levinson sees as a re-weighing of the relative investment in the self and the external world, can be viewed as a redistribution of libinal cathexes in accordance with the new importance now given to hitherto neglected aspects of the self, i.e. the self representations not earlier included in the core identity. Similarly, the Destruction/Creation polarity involves a heightened awareness of aggressive energy and correspondingly of the need to find new creative outlets, i.e. new fusions of aggressive and libinal energy and new ways of harnessing aggression in the service of constructive goals. In Levinson's terms, the man going through the mid-life transition has to come to terms with his own past history of destructiveness, the lingering resentments towards his parents and the memories of harmful acts committed against others. At the same time he must develop a new appreciation of destruction as an inevitable aspect of nature, ultimately involving the destruction of his own self as well and arousing in him the need for the creation of something that will survive. (In this, he seems close to Jaques' thoughts on the recognition

of mortality as provoking a mid-life crisis.)

The Attachment/Separation and Destruction/Creation polarities thus can be viewed as modes of relationship to one's objects and aspects of one's self, modes which demand reassessment as the object and self images are altered. More central from the point of view developed here are the two other polarities that have to do directly with the changing nature of the objects themselves or, more precisely, with the re-drawing of boundaries between self and object representations.

The Masculine/Feminine polarity, for a man, involves the reattribution of "feminine" qualities that had been acquired from and attributed to women, primarily mother, in the course of developing a predominantly "masculine" identity. According to Levinson, the mid-life transition demands a reconsideration of the primary maternal object that has been internalized early in development. A man "normally carries within himself a little boy and a mother who are engaged in a complex relationship. The mother may be symbolized as a powerful source of care and protection; as a powerful enemy who can deprive, smother and destroy him; as a weak figure who may abandon him or leave him open to assault from a vengeful father; and so on and on. In the Mid-life Transition a man can partially free himself from these images and anxieties." (Levinson, 1978, pp. 236-7) He adds that this necessarily

involves change in his relationships with women his own age, as he begins to shift out of the complementary style of relationship, characteristic of early adulthood, in which women are seen predominantly as providing what he himself lacks. Moreover, he hints as to the mechanism involved in this process: the withdrawing of projections and redrawing of boundaries in the identity core. "A man can now reclaim the qualities he formerly denied in himself and projected onto women." (p. 237)

The most important polarity that needs to be reconsidered in the mid-life transition for Levinson is the Young/Old, the polarity that involves the internal archetypes Jung called Puer and Senex. In referring to archetypes here (as above, in the other polarities as well), Levinson is of course speaking of something different from internal objects in the sense in which we have been using the term; but the difference does not appear to be crucial as Levinson emphasizes the specific nature of the internal archetype, its connection with parental figures for the individual, and also the individual nature of the compromise images that are arrived at through the process of reintegration. The point is that the reconsideration of the Senex archetype involves a modification, for the man, of his archaic, authoritarian paternal object, and this is the most important modification of all not only because, as Levinson points out, the process of development <u>per se</u>

involves a progressive reconsideration of identity in terms of age but also because the father provides for a man the original model against which his life is measured.

A crucial aspect of this is the coming to terms with the paternal object and the on-going competitive and dependent modes of relationship that persist from childhood with male figures of authority who come to represent the original internalized father. The object has to be modified, particularly if the on-going frightening and restrictive prohibitions it is associated with are to be overcome, as they must be to some extent if work on the other polarities is to proceed. But also, as with the Masculine/Feminine polarity, the modification of the object is an essential part of the process of new identifications that now need to be made. The very process of aging brings with it a new view of the external parental figures and a new possibility of looking to them as models. Much like the process that Jacobson (1964) describes as crucial to adolescence, looking to parents as models for mature love relationships, a new use that further detaches the external figures from the internal objects for which they were the original prototypes, so too now the father appears to the son in a new light as the person he is to become -- or avoid becoming. This new work of identification, then, helps to stimulate a reworking of the internalized object.

Thus Levinson's work strongly suggests not only that the

mid-life transition is a period of stormy readjustment and psychological reorganization, much like adolescence, but also that the work of development specifically involves a reworking of the object world, permitting new, hitherto rejected or unimagined relationships to occur. Specifically how this comes about or why it occurs, according to his data, with such regularity during the early 40's in the lives of men it is impossible to say. An adequate consideration of that question would require a more comprehensive look at all developmental stages and, I think, a particular examination of parenthood, along the lines initially suggested by Benedek. That is, of course, outside the scope of this work. But it is not hard to see that the act of bringing children into the world must test in a profound way the adequacy of the inner object world of their parents. At first children are narcissistic objects, aspects of the parental self; but as they become more highly individuated and autonomous, these object attributions become progressively less adequate and tend to give way to a revised object world. And that, as this work has attempted to demonstrate, necessarily involves a reworking of the archaic role definition, including the identity system and its links with the world of objects.

That is perhaps the key point: the self and object worlds are progressively synthesized through the role definitions that have been integrated as an aspect of identity.

The archaic role definition is the original core element, the first stable synthesis that is invoked again and again as identity is modified and enlarged. And it too is open to progressive modifications. The family is the setting in which the archaic role definition is forged. Subsequent groups -- in adolescence and adult work life -- are the cauldrons, as it were, in which it is tested and, possibly, resynthesized through exposure to the melting pressure of regressive forces. Indeed, it may be appropriate to say at this point that without the dangerous and anxiety provoking exposure to group life, the individual would lack the opportunities required to make the alterations in his identity that the continual tasks of development and adaptation require.

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